

UNDER THE MIKADO'S FLAG



EDWARD
STRATEMEYER

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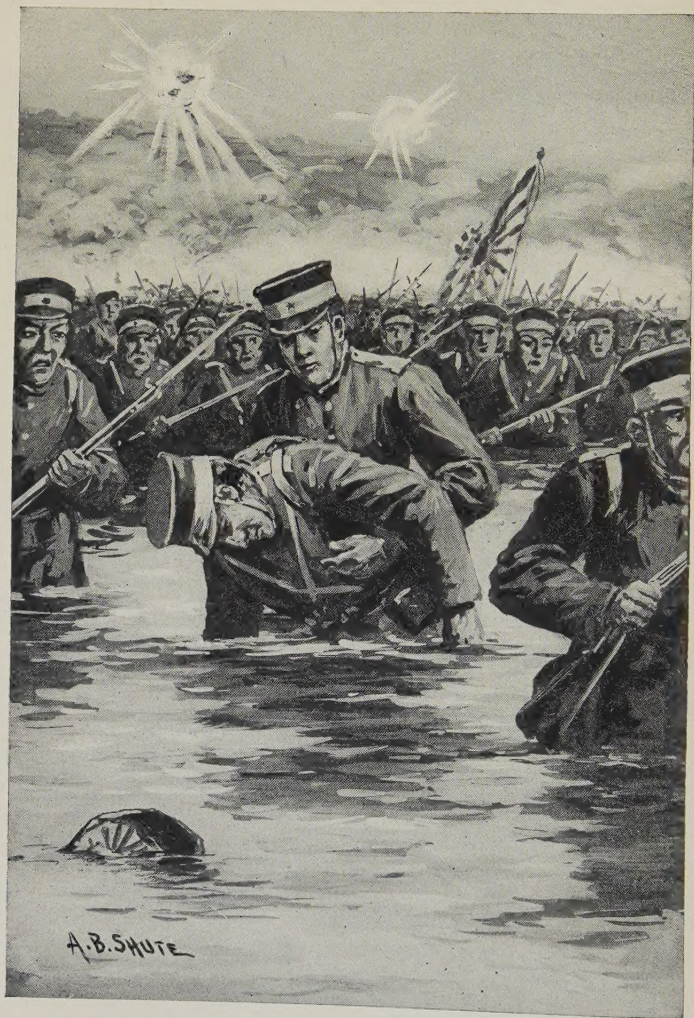
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BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

Author of "On to Peking," "Two Young Lumbermen," "Old Glory Series," "Colonial Series," "American Boys' Life of William McKinley," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY A. B. SHUTE



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UNDER THE MIKADO'S FLAG

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PREFACE

“UNDER THE MIKADO’S FLAG” relates the adventures of two young Americans in Korea and Manchuria during the outbreak of the great war between Russia and Japan, which has for its primary object the settling of the vexing question of how much of the Liao-tung Peninsula shall remain under Russian control, and whether or not this control shall eventually be extended to Korea.

In the tale are related some of the causes which led up to this struggle, and also the particulars of the sinking of many ships of war, the numerous attacks upon Port Arthur, the landing of the Japanese troops at Chemulpo and other points, and the advance northward through Korea to the Yalu River. Here the Russians made a strong stand, but being outnumbered they were forced to retreat; and then followed numerous other skirmishes and battles, leading up to the great conflict before Liao-Yang, in which half a million men fought desperately for days—an encounter which has few parallels in modern history.

To those who have read a previous volume of

mine, entitled "On to Peking," the leading character of the present story will perhaps seem like an old friend. Gilbert Pennington had already served in Cuba, in the Philippines, and in China, so it was no new thing for him to don a soldier's uniform and go forth to fight as of yore. And what was true of the young man who had once been a lieutenant of the United States regulars, was likewise true of his bosom chum, Ben Russell, and their faithful old comrades-in-arms, Carl Stummer and Dan Casey.

At the present writing it is impossible to predict what the outcome of this great war will be. The resources of Russia are tremendous, but that nation has many troubles at home. On the other hand, the sturdy Japanese are fighting with wonderful bravery—thinking nothing of facing death at every turn—and with a strategy which is as successful as it is astonishing.

Once more let me thank my young friends for the interest they have shown in my previous books. May they find the present volume equally interesting and profitable.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

October 1, 1904.

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UNDER THE MIKADO'S FLAG

CHAPTER I

A MATTER OF BUSINESS

"THEN you have no idea what has become of this Ivan Snokoff, Mr. Chase?"

"Not the slightest, Lieutenant Pennington. I met him at Dalny about a month ago, but since that time I have not seen him."

"Can you give me any information concerning this trading company of which he was the head?"

"Perhaps," was the slow answer. Nathan Chase rubbed his chin reflectively. "Would you mind telling me why you put the question?"

"The answer is simple enough," replied Gilbert Pennington. "As you know, I am connected with the Richmond Importing Company, of the United States."

"Yes, I know that. They tell me you are one of the principal stockholders."

"I am a stockholder, although not the principal one. But I am also connected with the company

as a selling agent. About six months ago our concern sold Ivan Snokoff five thousand dollars' worth of goods. We have been trying to collect the bill ever since."

"Phew! No wonder you are interested. Is the whole amount still due?"

"No, one thousand dollars have been paid. But it looks now as if we should have to whistle for the remaining four thousand unless I can lay my hands on Snokoff."

"I thought there was something crooked about Snokoff and his company from the very start," went on Nathan Chase, as he settled back in his office chair. "They didn't do business in the fair and square fashion of most Russian firms. They sold goods almost regardless of cost. No firm can do that and pay its debts. They claimed to be establishing trade, but trade established in that manner isn't worth having."

"I agree with you."

"The offices across the way were shut up ten days ago. Only a clerk and a porter were in charge. They have disappeared like their employer."

"Can you give me their names?"

"The clerk's name was Vanskynov. Somebody said he came to Port Arthur from Mukden. I know nothing of the porter."

"It's too bad." Gilbert Pennington drew a long breath. "I'd give a few dollars just to lay my hands on this Ivan Snokoff. I'd let him know what I thought of him."

"Have you reported the affair to the authorities?"

"Not yet. I have been hoping right along that I might spot Snokoff somewhere. Besides, matters here seem to be very unsettled just now."

"You are right there, lieutenant. And they may be more unsettled before long."

"Do you think there will be war between Russia and Japan?"

"It looks very much like it. How long have you been in Manchuria?"

"I came over from Nagasaki a week ago."

"Then you know but little of affairs here. Russia has been fortifying this port for several months, and our harbor is filled with warships."

"I saw some of the warships as our vessel came up the harbor. If war should come, Port Arthur may have a hot time of it."

"Exactly." There was a pause. "Anything else I can do for you, lieutenant? If not, I'll get at my desk work. My correspondence has been very heavy lately."

"Nothing more, Mr. Chase. I am much obliged to you."

"Not at all. I am always glad to do what I can for a brother American. Come in again and let me know how you make out."

"I will," answered Gilbert Pennington, and after a hearty hand-shake he left the main offices of the Anglo-Chinese Trading Company and walked slowly up the broad and well-kept business street of Port Arthur upon which the buildings of the concern were located.

Gilbert Pennington was a young man of Southern blood and strong military tendencies. He came from Richmond, Virginia, and upon the death of his parents had drifted, first to the West Indies and then to New York. This was during the opening of our war with Spain, and fired with patriotism, the young Southerner entered the volunteer service and became one of Roosevelt's Rough Riders, as related in one of my previous books, entitled "A Young Volunteer in Cuba."

From Cuba the young soldier shifted to the Philippines, where, in company with his old-time chums, the Russell boys, he saw much active service under Generals Otis and McArthur, and the much-invented General Lanyon, many particulars of which are given in "Under Otis in the Philip-

pines" and other volumes of the "Old Glory Series."

While the young soldier was in the Philippines he joined the regular army and shortly after this was sent to China, to aid in the suppression of the Boxer uprising and the rescue of many missionaries and others who had fled to the legations in Peking for safety. As a lieutenant in the regulars Gilbert saw a good deal of hard fighting, the particulars of which have been set forth in "On to Peking." In this volume are also related how the young soldier overturned a plot to cheat him out of his legal share of stock of the Richmond Importing Company, and how he at last came into possession of sixteen thousand dollars of stock which was then worth exactly twice its face value.

Since those strenuous days many changes had taken place. With the rebellion in the Philippines and the uprising in China at an end, the young American had left the army as speedily as possible and applied himself strictly to business. New men were now at the head of the Importing Company, and as Gilbert had a fair knowledge of Japan, Korea, and the eastern coast of China, he was made the selling agent in that territory. For over a year he had done very well at this, receiving both a salary and a commission, with all expenses paid.

The first real snag had been struck when he had started to do business with Ivan Snokoff, who represented himself as the head of the Russian-American Importing and Exporting Company, with headquarters at Port Arthur,—a city leased to the Russians by China, and located at the extreme southern part of the Liao-tung Peninsula of Manchuria.

Snokoff could speak English fairly well, and he was one of the smoothest talkers possible to imagine. He said he had many relatives in the United States, and loved to do business with the Yankees because they were so straightforward and honest.

“ I lof not the Germans or the Englees,” said Ivan Snokoff. “ It is them who are too sharp for the poor Russian, yes. Ivan Snokoff will trade with his friend Pennington, yes—then he will be safe,” and he nearly crushed Gilbert’s fingers with the warmth of his grasp.

Gilbert was too easy-going to see through such a wily schemer as Ivan Snokoff. He took the Russian’s words in good faith, and a mere statement from several others that Snokoff undoubtedly had money was accepted without question. He also learned that a certain Captain Barusky had a share in the Russian company, and that the Baruskys were wealthy.

The first consignment of goods had amounted to four hundred dollars and the second to twelve hundred dollars. Both consignments had been paid for promptly, and Gilbert and the others connected with the Richmond Company had congratulated themselves on having acquired such a customer at Port Arthur, which was rather a hard city in which to sell American goods.

Then came the five-thousand-dollar order. "I haf a great chance to make much money, yes," said Ivan Snokoff. "Send the goods quickly, and I will discount the whole bill. Do not delay, no—or my rival will get the order instead of me." And the goods were shipped as quickly as possible, Gilbert sending the order by cablegram. Ivan Snokoff was truly delighted and spoke enthusiastically of his profits. But the settlement was delayed from time to time, and then suddenly the Russian disappeared, the offices were closed up, and it slowly dawned upon Gilbert and the Company that they had been led into a trap and swindled.

At first the young American knew not what to do. He was in a foreign country, and his Russian rivals had never wanted him to do business there. Not one of them was willing to give him any information concerning Snokoff or his connections, and at the bank it was stated that the rascal had closed his

account and not shown himself since. Even the customhouse officials could tell nothing. Gilbert had feared to go to the police, knowing that the police department of Russia is a wonderful and fearful institution, and that the officers might lock him up for having had anything to do with Snokoff in the first place.

"But I'm going to bring that fellow to justice somehow," said Gilbert to himself, more than once. "He shan't escape as easily as he thinks."

Mr. Nathan Chase was an American merchant who did business both at Port Arthur and at Tien-Tsin. Gilbert had met him once at the latter city, while the young American was still a soldier. The merchant had just come back to Port Arthur after a trip to Peking, and as soon as Gilbert heard of this he made the call which has just been described.

Gilbert knew that a war between Japan and Russia would greatly complicate matters. He had heard about this at Nagasaki, and could now see that preparations for resisting an attack had been going forward in and around Port Arthur during the entire winter. All the forts had been strengthened, and the city was filled with soldiers from Russia. Many of the Chinese and Japanese residents of the place were leaving, and the railroad station was crowded from morning to night.

"If Port Arthur should be attacked by the Japanese, everything will be upset here," thought the young American dismally. "In the excitement such a thing as having Snokoff arrested will be out of the question. I wish——"

Gilbert's thoughts were interrupted at this moment by the appearance of a young man who was hurrying along the street, a bundle in each hand. A second look at the fellow convinced the young American that the individual was Ivan Snokoff's clerk.

"Hold on!" he shouted, and running forward, caught the clerk by the arm. The fellow stopped, looked at the young American in alarm, and then tried to jerk away.

"Let me go," he said, in Russian.

"I wish to talk to you," answered Gilbert, who had picked up a smattering of the language.

"What do you want?"

"I want to know what has become of Ivan Snokoff."

"I know not."

"You worked for him. How came you to close up the offices so unexpectedly?"

"By my master's orders."

"Do you know he owes our company a great deal of money?"

At this the young Russian shrugged his shoulders.

"What have I to do with that? You made your bargain with him, not with me."

"That is true, but if you are honest you will not mind telling me where he is."

"Have I not said that I do not know?" The clerk hesitated and then squinted at Gilbert suggestively. "No, I cannot tell you where Ivan Snokoff is, but—but——"

"But what?"

"Sire, I am a poor man, and I have a wife and two children to support."

"You are too young to have a wife and two children."

"No, sire, it is true. I was seventeen when I was married, and Ulma, my wife, was but fifteen."

"Do you mean to say you need money?"

"It is true. Ivan Snokoff left me without work, and owing me money. I have next to nothing saved. To-day I am moving my family to poorer quarters. In another two weeks my money will all be gone."

"What has all this to do with me?"

"'Tis plain enough, sire. You need information, Nicholas Vanskynov needs money. Let us make an exchange."

"You will tell me something of value if I will pay you for it?"

"Yes."

"How much do you want?"

Again the young Russian shrugged his shoulders.

"What shall I say? You are a rich man and will never miss a few *rubles*."

"Well, I shall not mind paying you a few *rubles* if you can really tell me something of value," answered Gilbert.

"Then come to some place where it is warm and I will tell you all I know," returned Nicholas Vanskynov.

CHAPTER II

GILBERT LEARNS SOMETHING

THE winter had been long and severe in Manchuria, and even now, early in February, it was biting cold and with a touch of snow in the air at Port Arthur.

Close at hand was a shop where refreshments of various kinds could be had and to this place Gilbert led the way, making certain that the Russian followed. He saw at a glance that Nicholas Vanskynov was a fellow of small caliber and could readily be handled if given a little money. Sitting down to a table, he ordered a cup of coffee and some fancy cakes for himself and asked the other what he would have.

"Since you are so kind, I will take a glass of *quass*," was the answer, *quass* being a sour beer much used by Russians.

"Now, what can you tell me of value?" asked the young American, after the refreshments had been brought and Vanskynov had partaken of the liquor with apparent satisfaction.

"Let us first speak of the reward, sire."

"How much do you want?" demanded Gilbert sharply. "Remember, I can hand you over to the police, if I desire."

"The police!" At the threat the young Russian grew pale, for the police department is a terror to all who live under Russian law, its findings being generally final and absolute. "How so?"

"For aiding Ivan Snokoff to get away without paying his just debts."

"I did not aid him, no, no! When he went I thought all was right—I did not learn the truth until later. I have lost much myself, for I thought I was to have a steady position with him."

"How much do you want me to pay you?"

"Not much, sire, no. Surely you will never miss ten *rubles*," went on the young Russian, mentioning a sum less than eight dollars, a Russian *ruble* being worth, at the present time, 76 to 78 cents.

"Can you give me information of value?"

"I think I can."

"Then tell me what you know, and if the news is worth anything you shall have your money."

"Ah, I knew the American would be generous to a poor Russian—the United States is a great country."

"What do you know?"

"It is of Captain Barusky that I would speak—he who comes of a most honorable family."

"The same captain that had an interest in the trading company?" questioned Gilbert quickly.

"Yes, the same. He and Ivan Snokoff are great friends—I have heard that they have been in many business ventures together."

"Do you know where Captain Barusky is?"

"He was out of active service for several years, but now he is once more in the army. Since it looks so much like war with Japan the Czar has called upon all our country's defenders to take their proper places in the army and the navy."

"And where is this Captain Barusky stationed?"

"He was at Mukden, but I have heard that he was seen at one of the forts of this port only day before yesterday."

"What fort?"

"That I cannot tell, but I think it was the one nearest to the dry dock."

"I am glad to know this," said Gilbert slowly. He was wondering how he could get hold of his man. "Do you know for a fact that he was a partner in the company?"

"Yes, for I once saw the papers. Besides, he once lent Ivan Snokoff six hundred *rubles* with which to pay off certain bills for goods, and I know

he shared in the profits. They were a pair of sly foxes. Were I you, I should have this bold captain held by the authorities. It may be he will then reveal what has become of Ivan Snokoff."

"I'll certainly do something—if I can find him." Gilbert was silent for a moment. "Give me your new address," he continued. "I may want you again."

"And the *rubles*——"

"Here they are," and the young American counted out the amount in Russian scrip, for silver *rubles* are now but seldom seen. "I'll give you a good deal more, if you'll aid me to get back what belongs to our company."

"Nicholas Vanskynov is at your service, sire. Here is the address," and it was written down in a notebook which Gilbert brought forth.

After this the young American questioned the Russian clerk closely concerning Ivan Snokoff's methods of doing business. He learned that all the goods sold had been shipped out of Manchuria, so that to trace them further was next to impossible. Beyond a doubt Captain Barusky was hand-in-glove with Snokoff, and the pair had cleaned up a good many thousand dollars by their nefarious actions.

After parting with the Russian clerk, Gilbert

attended to various matters of business for the balance of that day and also for the morning of the next. While he was near the railroad station he saw a long train come in from the north packed with soldiers.

"This certainly looks like war," he reasoned, as he watched the soldiers leave the train and march off to a temporary barracks. "And those chaps look as if they meant business, too," he continued, noticing how well the body was drilled. "I declare, it arouses my old fighting blood just to look at them!" And he drew himself up as of old, when he was a lieutenant under Old Glory.

War talk was everywhere, and Russians and foreigners of all sorts filled the streets and discussed the situation in subdued tones. The Japanese said but little, and the Russians gave them the blackest of looks as they passed by.

The strained situation between Japan and Russia was of long standing. In a work of this kind it is not necessary to go into all the details which led to the great war which was so close at hand. Sufficient be it to say that Japan objected strongly to having any part of China or Korea held by Russia, and viewed with alarm the strong fortifications of Port Arthur, the building of the great Trans-Siberian railroad from the frontier to the port itself,

and the occupation of other Chinese towns by the Russians.

“In but a few years more Russia will claim both Manchuria and Korea,” said the Japanese, “and then our own safety will be menaced.” Which was certainly true, for the islands that make up the kingdom of Japan lie directly to the southeast of the territory named, with nothing but the Sea of Japan between. More than this, the occupation of Manchuria and Korea by the Russians would interfere seriously with Japanese trade—a commerce that amounted to many millions of dollars annually.

This was the Japanese side of the story. On the Russian side, that country claimed it was not occupying anything for which it had not paid, and it was merely establishing itself in Manchuria to preserve peace and order.

“If we leave the Chinese to themselves in Manchuria no foreigners doing business there will be safe,” said the Russians. “The railroad is bound to come sooner or later, and we may as well build and own it as to leave the work to somebody else.” This was fair talk, yet the world at large felt that the whole scheme was one meant to enlarge Russian territory and power, and do it largely at ultimate expense to Japan.

Port Arthur is a commercial city of considerable

size, located at the base of a series of hills overlooking the sea beyond. The entrance to the harbor itself, which is directly in front of the city, is long and narrow. On each spur of land are several forts, and beyond those on the right, as the harbor is entered, is a large basin, with a single dry dock. On the left is what is called West Port. The inner harbor is somewhat oval in shape, two miles wide from east to west, and a mile wide north to south.

As already mentioned, the fortifications were strong, yet the Russian authorities were doing all in their power to make them stronger. They were likewise bringing into the city vast quantities of supplies, for what purpose the foreigners could only imagine. Every mile of the railroad was being closely guarded, so that the Chinese natives, known to be friendly to the Japanese, might not tear up the tracks.

Gilbert knew that there were four forts located at the entrance to the harbor, and he determined to visit these before going to the other strongholds about the city. He understood very well that he would not be permitted inside any of the forts, but thought there would be no objections to his making inquiries about Captain Barusky.

"Those higher in command will certainly want to know what sort of a man he is," thought Gilbert.

"I don't think they'll endure anything crooked, even though they don't want us Americans to take away Russian trade."

His visit to the first fort was a failure. He was halted while still some distance off and asked his business.

"I am looking for a certain Captain Barusky," said he. "Is he located here?"

The guard did not know.

"Can you find out for me?" was Gilbert's next question.

"Not at present. Come in two hours. I shall be relieved then."

This was all the young American could get out of the guard, and he was told, if he remained where he was, he would be arrested. Hearing this, Gilbert lost no time in hurrying away.

Some time later he was in the vicinity of the second fort. A great lot of extra stores had arrived and all was in confusion. Some Chinese coolies were handling the stuff and now some Russian soldiers came out to assist them, grumbling loudly because the Chinese could not do the work alone.

Gilbert was greatly interested in the work of the coolies. Evidently they had to carry their loads to the very heart of the fort, for each was blindfolded

and had to take hold of a rope, the front end of which was in the hands of a Russian sergeant. The sergeant brandished a whip, and if a coolie did not move to suit him, he would give the fellow a cut with the lash.

"This is certainly tough on the Chinamen," thought the young American. "It's a wonder they don't revolt. If they wanted to, they could make matters warm for the Russians."

The coolies having disappeared for the time being, the Russian soldiers came up for their loads. With them were several officers, one of whom eyed Gilbert narrowly.

All unconscious of what was taking place, Gilbert drew a little closer to the stores. Then of a sudden he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the Russian officer.

Gilbert was slightly startled and drew back. But the grip upon his shoulder was not relaxed.

"Tell me what you are doing here?" repeated the officer.

"Not very much," was the young American's answer.

"I saw you at the other fort a while ago."

"That is true. I was——"

"Don't try to explain here. Come with me. We



"WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" DEMANDED THE RUSSIAN OFFICER. — *Page 20.*

allow no spying around here, I can tell you that. You are an American, I believe."

"Yes."

"So much the worse for you. Come with me."

And somewhat against his will, Gilbert was marched off to one of the buildings inside of the fortifications.

CHAPTER III

DETAINED BY THE RUSSIANS

IN spite of the fact, well known to all in Port Arthur, that the Russians allowed no foreigners in or near their forts, Gilbert was much astonished to find himself virtually a prisoner of the officer who had detained him.

Almost before he knew it, he found himself in a small office attached to the fort proper. Here two burly soldiers were on guard, and each scowled ominously at him.

"I reckon I've put my foot into it this time," he told himself.

He wished to explain to the officer, but the latter would not listen. A few words were spoken to one of the soldiers, in a Siberian dialect which Gilbert could not understand, and then the officer left as quickly as he had come.

"What are you going to do with me?" questioned the young American, after a moment of silence.

At this query each of the Russian soldiers merely shrugged his shoulders.

"You have no right to detain me in this manner," went on Gilbert. "I am an American citizen and have done no wrong."

For answer one of the soldiers motioned him to a bench and placed his rather dirty hand over Gilbert's mouth, at the same time raising his gun. It was a hint to sit down and keep quiet, and feeling it would be useless to resist, Gilbert did as suggested.

Half an hour dragged by slowly, and the young American was growing impatient, when the officer who had first accosted him came back, accompanied by a dark, surly individual dressed in the uniform of a captain.

"Here is the American," said the first of the pair. "I found him watching us rather closely."

"Ha!" came from the second. He turned to Gilbert. "And what have you to say for yourself?"

"What is there to say?" returned the young American boldly. "Certainly I have done no wrong."

"You were acting the part of a spy."

"Not at all. I am looking for a certain Captain Barusky, who is, so I have been told, located at one of the forts in or near this port."

"Captain Barusky? That is my name."

"Indeed!" Gilbert was taken somewhat by sur-

prise. He looked at the man closely, and the face did not at all please him.

"What do you want of me? What is your name?"

"I want to see you on business," was Gilbert's bold answer. "My name is Gilbert Pennington, and I am the selling agent for the Richmond Importing Company. I think you have heard of that concern."

Captain Barusky started slightly and changed color. But he quickly recovered and took on a look of unconcern.

"I have heard of your company, yes, but I know little about it, and nothing about you."

"Probably you know more about Ivan Snokoff," went on Gilbert dryly.

"Yes, I know him quite well."

"You were partners in business, so I understand."

"Partners? Never! I am not a business man."

"Do you mean to say that you did not have an interest in the concern which Ivan Snokoff ran?"

"Never. Why are you so curious to know?"

"Because Ivan Snokoff owes our company four thousand dollars, and he has run away," answered Gilbert flatly. He felt that the man before him

was not telling the truth. "I have been told upon pretty good authority that you were his partner."

"It is not true." Captain Barusky glared at Gilbert savagely. "This looks as if you had come here to make trouble for me. Let me warn you to beware. You cannot attack the honor of a Russian officer recklessly."

Gilbert felt the truth of the last words and resolved to be cautious. He felt that he was among those who were more likely to prove enemies than friends.

"Then you mean to tell me that you had nothing to do with Ivan Snokoff or his company?" he asked, after a pause.

"I will not say that. I knew Snokoff fairly well, and when he came to me for a loan I lent him several hundred *rubles*, which, later on, he paid back."

"And you had nothing to do with the company?"

"Nothing whatever."

"If that is true, I must beg your pardon for troubling you. Can you tell me where Ivan Snokoff is?"

"I cannot, although I think he has gone to Liao-Yang or Mukden."

There was a pause, which was broken by the officer who had brought Gilbert in.

"Do you think he is a spy?" he questioned abruptly.

"Hardly," answered Captain Barusky, after some hesitation.

"Shall we let him go?"

"Yes. I will see that he does not linger around this vicinity." The captain turned to the young American. "Come with me, and be thankful that you have escaped a night in the guard-house."

Glad to get away at any cost, Gilbert followed Captain Barusky from the office and out of the fort grounds. The two walked a distance of several rods further, when the captain came to a halt.

"Now you are at liberty to go," said he, in a low voice, so that the soldiers standing near might not hear. "But before you do so, allow me to give you a word of advice. Do not try to make trouble for me, for if you do, I shall certainly make Port Arthur too hot to hold you." And with this warning he turned abruptly and hurried back to the fort.

For an instant Gilbert thought to answer back, but then he shut his lips tightly and remained silent. He was satisfied in his mind that Captain Barusky had not told him the truth concerning Ivan Snokoff

and his dealings with that rascal. Yet how to get hold of the captain in a legal way was a question.

"I'll have to go slow," he thought. "If I don't the captain will try to prove that I am a spy—and then I may be put in prison or shot. I wish this war scare was over. Then a fellow might get down to real business."

The next day was a busy one for the young American. He had several bills to collect, and in some instances it was hard to get the money. There was also something wrong about a consignment of goods, and this matter had to be straightened out at the customhouse.

Gilbert had had an account at one of the banks, but now he resolved to close this and stow his cash about his person.

"There is no telling what is going to happen soon," he thought. "If there is any fighting here, financial matters will be all upset. I'll keep the money where I can lay my hands on it."

There was another matter to worry Gilbert fully as much as did the money. He had had consigned to several firms in Manchuria goods to the value of sixteen thousand dollars. These goods were on board the three-masted schooner *Columbia*, which was now somewhere in Japanese waters, with part of her cargo consigned to firms in Nagasaki. What

would happen to the schooner, if she should attempt to come into Port Arthur during the outbreak of a war, there was no telling.

"If she came here from Nagasaki, perhaps the Russians would capture or sink her," he reasoned. "I wish I could get Captain Ponsberry to remain at Nagasaki until the atmosphere clears just a little."

Gilbert knew Captain Ponsberry very well—a sailor of the old school, who had plowed the waters of the Pacific and the Far East for many years. The captain had been to Manchuria twice before and knew the surrounding waters very well.

"I must get word to him somehow," said the young American to himself. But how to send word was a question, for no steamer was sailing and the mails were closed.

On returning to the hotel at which he was stopping Gilbert found several letters awaiting him. The majority were business communications, but one was of a private nature, and as soon as he beheld the hand-writing he tore it open in surprise.

"From my old chum, Ben Russell!" he cried, as he looked at the signature. "Where in the world can he be now? I thought he had gone home to stay there. Dated from Manila, too, and I thought he was in Buffalo or New York."

The communication was a long one, filling sixteen closely written pages, and ran in part as follows:

“MY DEAR CHUM GILBERT: I know you will be surprised to receive this, written from the above-named place, but the fact of it is, I changed my mind after writing to you that I was going home to visit my Uncle Job Dowling, and my brothers Larry and Walter, who left for home, as you know, two years ago.

“Some time ago I received several letters from home, including one each from Larry and Walter. Walter has gone into business and is doing remarkably well, so he tells me. But Larry did not want to stay on land, and after knocking around for the best part of a year he entered into communication with his old friend, Captain Ponsberry of the *Columbia*, and the upshot of the matter was that Larry is now on board of the *Columbia*, acting as second mate. He is certainly a sea-dog if ever there was one, and I begin to believe he will end his days on the ocean in spite of all we can do to make him settle down on land.

“Larry knew that the old *Columbia* was carrying a cargo for your company, and as soon as he could he communicated with me, stating that the schooner

was going to stop at Manila while on her way to Japan and Manchuria, and asking me to wait there until he could see me.

"The *Columbia* came in several days ago, and I can tell you I was mighty glad to see Larry, and to see old Captain Ponsberry, too. It was like a touch of old times, and I was sorry you and Walter were not there. Do you remember the good time we had at our last meeting? How we talked of all the hardships we had endured, and of the narrow escapes we had had? And how you told us of your adventures in China? I shall never forget that meeting, and of how we celebrated with a big dinner.

"As soon as I saw Larry I knew he had a card up his sleeve, and it came out pretty quick. He wanted me to take the trip on the *Columbia*. He had arranged it with Captain Ponsberry so that I could have half of his quarters (Larry's, I mean), and he said it would give me a chance to try an ocean trip on a sailing vessel and also an opportunity to see you and see another part of the world.

"I didn't think so much of the trip on a sailing vessel, but I did think it would be pleasant to sail with Larry and with our old friend the captain, and when he mentioned you that settled it, and I said yes almost before I knew it. And then you ought

to have seen Larry hug me! 'It's just boss, Ben,' said he. 'We'll have the best times ever!' And he fairly danced a jig over the prospect. The captain was pleased, too, and said so.

"We sail early in the morning, and you know as much about when the *Columbia* will arrive as I do. I shall look for you either at Nagasaki or Port Arthur, and let me say frankly that I can hardly await the time when we shall be together again. When I arrive you must knock off for awhile and go sight-seeing and holiday-making with me."

CHAPTER IV

TROUBLESOME DAYS IN PORT ARTHUR

GILBERT read Ben Russell's letter with keen interest. The contents surprised him, just as his chum had thought they would, and he drew a long sigh of uncertainty as he laid the epistle down.

"Ben and Larry!" he murmured. "Yes, I'll be more than glad to meet them both, but if the old *Columbia* gets into trouble with her cargo, what will become of them?" And then he fell to wondering if Ben was still wearing his uniform as a captain of the volunteers, or if he had donned civilian's costume. The Russians would certainly not care for an American officer, in uniform, among them.

The following afternoon took the young American to an outlying quarter of the city. Here were located a number of humble houses, occupied largely by Chinese and Japanese, who worked along the wharves and at the dry dock.

Gilbert wanted to find a Japanese stevedore named Jiru Siko, for he imagined that this individual knew something about Ivan Snokoff which was,

perhaps, unknown to Nicholas Vanskynov. He knew that Siko lived at the end of the narrow and dirty street, with his wife and half a dozen children.

As he approached the spot he noticed that something unusual was taking place. A motley crowd of Japanese, Chinese, and Russians had collected near the house, and one Russian, who was armed with a stout club, was talking loudly and commandingly.

"Out of the house at once, you dirty dog of a Nippon!" came from the Russian. "Out of the house, I say. Your being there defiles the very walls."

"I have paid the rent," answered Jiru Siko, who was a small man, with a hand that had been hurt lately by having a box fall upon it. "Why cannot I remain?"

"Because the dirty sons of Nippon must leave this place," shouted the Russian. "You are to go, and all the others are to go, too!"

"And what of my rent money? Nine *rubles*, in clean money——"

"The *rubles* shall go for repairs, after you have left the house. Now out with you."

"But my wife is not well. And my children——"

"No time have I to listen to woeful tales,"

stormed the Russian, who was merely a rent gatherer, and who had been ordered by his rich master to clear out all the Japanese in the street. "Take your wife and children where you will, only leave here, and at once."

"It is unjust," stammered Jiru Siko.

"Yes, it is unjust!" came in a shout from half a dozen present.

"Ha, so you defy me!" shouted the Russian, in a rage. "Shall I bring the soldiery here to make you prisoners?"

At the mention of the soldiery the crowd fell back and several Japanese and Chinese slunk out of sight. Evidently they had had a taste of Russian law before and wanted no more of it.

Scarcely knowing what to do, for his wife was sick and his youngest child was but a babe four months old, Jiru Siko fell back to the doorway of his house and blocked the entrance.

"Come out of that!" continued the Russian. And then, without warning, he aimed a blow with his club at the Japanese's head.

But the blow did not land as intended, for leaping forward, Gilbert knocked the Russian rent gatherer's arm aside.

"For shame," said the young American. "What right have you to attack this man in this manner?"

Astonished to have his actions interfered with, the Russian wheeled around and confronted Gilbert. He had expected to behold another Japanese, or a Chinese, and when he saw an American he faltered a little.

"I want him to get out of this house," he growled.

"Ah, Master Pennington!" cried Jiru Siko joyfully. "You come best time. You help poor Jiru Siko. No can move—no money move—no move wife sick—no move little baby—pay rent no move," and he chattered away for fully a minute, doing his best to explain the situation, which was to the effect that he had paid rent for nearly a month longer and that his wife was sick and must not be thrown out on the street, along with the baby and the other children.

"If this man has paid his rent, I do not see how you can put him out," said Gilbert sternly, to the Russian. "It is not lawful, and you know it."

"The Japanese must go."

"Then give him back his rent money."

"I have it not."

"Then go and get it. To take his money and then throw him out would be robbery, and you know it."

A wordy war followed, in which half a dozen present participated. Supported by Gilbert, Jiru Siko refused to budge unless his rent money was returned, and at last the rent gatherer brought out his purse and counted out the amount. Then several others also demanded their money and it was given to them, although grudgingly. From one the rent gatherer asked who Gilbert was, and when he was told he turned to the young American.

"You have caused me great trouble," said he savagely. "I shall take good care that you are reported. You are no friend to Russia."

"You may do as you please," answered Gilbert simply. Nevertheless, the rent gatherer's words disturbed him not a little.

Jiru Siko was overjoyed to get back his money and at once made preparations to leave the house. From him Gilbert gathered that all of the Japanese were expected to leave Port Arthur without delay. That the Russians now expected war there could be no doubt.

The Japanese listened attentively to what the young American had to say about Ivan Snokoff. He could not tell what had become of the fellow, but he was as sure as Nicholas Vanskynov had been that Snokoff and Captain Barusky had been

partners. He also said that Barusky was the black sheep of his family, and that the other rich members had cast him off.

"Jiru Siko no forget what Master Pennington do for 'im," said the Japanese, on parting. "Pay back sometime, maybe."

"If war comes, what will you do, Siko?"

"Fight—just the same fight in China when Master Pennington fight."

"Were you in China at that time?" cried Gilbert, with interest.

"Yes—fight Tien-Tsin and Peking—stay by railroad long time."

"What about your family?"

"Take family to Japan first—all family Nagasaki—family take good care wife an' babies—gran'-fadder, gran'mudder, all Nagasaki."

"Well, I hope this war cloud blows over and you don't have to fight," said Gilbert; and then the two parted.

Gilbert had expected to consult with Mr. Chase, but on the following morning he learned that the merchant had departed for Mukden, to be gone a week or longer. The city was now agitated more than ever, and nothing but war was talked about on every hand.

Rather tired out, the young American returned

to his hotel at six in the evening for dinner. He was about to pass up to the room he had been occupying when a porter stopped him.

"You are requested to report at the office," said the man respectfully.

Wondering what was coming next, Gilbert walked into the office where the proprietor sat, smoking a cigar. He was a fat and rather a jolly-looking Russian.

"You wish to see me?" inquired Gilbert.

"I do, Mr. Pennington," was the stiff answer. The hotel proprietor cleared his throat. "It is exceedingly unpleasant for me to do so, but I have to inform you that your room has been taken by somebody else."

"My room? Why, I expected to keep it for some time yet."

"Ahem! Sorry, but I cannot let you have it any longer."

"Can you give me another just as good?"

"I cannot give you any room at all."

Gilbert looked at the hotel proprietor, who dropped his eyes in confusion. There was an awkward pause.

"This means, I suppose, that you do not want me here any longer?"

"Hardly that, Mr. Pennigton. I—ahem!—I

cannot let you have any room; that is all there is to it."

"But there must be some reason for this."

"I am sorry, but I cannot offer any explanations. Your luggage has been packed for you and stands at the lower end of the hall. As soon as you have settled up, you may remove it to any place you please, or I will send it for you."

"Do you think you are treating me fairly, M. Raspan?"

The fat hotel man drew up his shoulders. "Personally, I like you very much, Mr. Pennington," he said. "But I am powerless in this manner. Times are not what they should be—our whole city is much upset. I cannot harbor anybody who defends the Japanese as you have done. M. Sandrek owns this hotel and also owns some of the houses in which the Japanese dwelt. You perhaps can put the tail on the horse."

"Which means that M. Sandrek, through his rent gatherer, has ordered me from this hotel," said Gilbert bitterly. "Very well, I will go and at once. How much is my bill?"

The hotel proprietor consulted his books. "Sixteen *rubles* and twenty-five *kopecks*," he said. "But you will dine first, yes?"

"No, I'll take my orders and go instantly," re-

turned Gilbert grimly. His temper was beginning to rise, and he controlled himself with difficulty.

"I am powerless, Mr. Pennington. If I went against the order——"

"Oh, I can understand your situation," answered the young American, and continued with sarcasm: "I don't expect every Russian to have a backbone of his own."

"We have all the backbone we need!" cried the hotel man, and swept into his cash drawer the money Gilbert threw on the counter. "What about your luggage?"

"I will take the bag, and send for the trunk later."

Once on the street Gilbert did not know which way to turn. There was another hotel close by, but the accommodations there were very poor. A third hotel was several squares away. He determined to try this and hurried in its direction.

"Have you just arrived in the city?" was the first question put.

"No, I have been stopping here for some time," and the young American passed over his card.

"At what place?" and when he mentioned the name of the hotel he was asked why he had left.

"They did not wish me to stay any longer."

"Is it possible? Wait, and we will see if we can accommodate you."

Gilbert sat down, and in great haste a clerk was sent to the hostelry at which Gilbert had been stopping. Ten minutes later the clerk returned, and the young American was then told that he could not be accommodated.

"Here's a state of things truly," thought the ex-lieutenant. "I wonder if it is going to be this way all over."

It was so at the next hotel, and also that following. Then Gilbert found a small place kept by a German who had a Russian wife. Business was bad with the German, and he listened eagerly to the offer the young American made him.

"I told you vot," he said. "I keep you, but you say noddings apout it, hey? You haf der room py der back of der house und you eats dare, too, hey?"

"I'm willing," said Gilbert; and so it was settled. By this time he was tremendously hungry, and never did a meal taste better than that which the German hotel keeper set before him.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST NAVAL BATTLE

WHILE Gilbert was having his own troubles in Port Arthur the differences between Russia and Japan were speedily reaching the acute stage.

Long before, by the Anglo-Japanese treaty, Russia had promised to evacuate Manchuria. But this, as we have already seen, had not been done, and, instead, the Russians had begun to flock to northern Korea, where a certain company obtained mining possessions and even began to construct fortifications.

These advances meant, to Japan, but one thing—the occupation, eventually, by Russia of the whole of Manchuria and Korea. This would become a constant menace to Japan, and protests were at once made at St. Petersburg, calling for a friendly settlement between the two interested nations and China and Korea.

The outcome was thoroughly unsatisfactory to Japan. Russia contended that so far as Manchuria was concerned she would treat only with China, and

that Japan must keep out of the muddle. Regarding Korea she was willing to allow Japan to operate, commercially, in the south, so long as Russia was left alone in the north.

The discussion grew hotter and hotter, but Russia would not budge in the least from the stand first taken, and during the delay did all in her power to put her army and navy on a war footing. Perhaps the Russian authorities thought to catch the sons of Nippon napping; if so, they were sadly mistaken, as events soon after proved.

Negotiations were broken off on February 7, 1904. The Japanese minister left St. Petersburg, being called home by the Japanese Cabinet sitting at Tokio. The war was on.

The news was flashed around the world, and reached Port Arthur the next day after Gilbert had made his arrangements with the German hotel keeper. The city was in a greater excitement than ever, and on every corner large crowds collected, to talk over the situation.

If the Russians had been hard on the Japanese in the city before they were doubly so now, and some of the poorer Japanese hardly knew what to do. They were hounded from one spot to another, and, in some instances, made to leave behind them all they possessed.

"This is what I call mean," said Gilbert to the hotel keeper. "The least the Russians could do would be to let them take their things and depart in peace."

"Say noddings," whispered the German, putting his finger beside his nose. "Say noddings, or you vos git into droubles ofer your head alreatty!" And after that Gilbert was more particular as to what he said in public. But his kindness to the Japanese had already been observed, and he was pointed out as one who had no sympathy with the Russian cause.

"If this thing keeps on, the best I can do is to get out of Port Arthur," the young American told himself. And then he thought again of the *Columbia*, and wondered how those on board were faring.

Gilbert had gone to bed about ten o'clock and was sleeping soundly, when of a sudden he awoke and sat bolt upright.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, half aloud, thinking somebody had given him a shaking.

Scarcely had the words left his lips than he heard a distant explosion. Then he realized that it had been a similar sound which had aroused him.

"Something is wrong, that is certain," he mused. "That sounded like a small powder magazine going up. Can it be that the war has really begun?"

While he was meditating another explosion rent the midnight air—this time louder than ever. Waiting no longer, he sprang out on the floor of his room, and donned his clothing as rapidly as possible. He heard many folks walking through the hotel, and footsteps could also be heard on the street, hurrying in various directions.

“What does this mean?” he asked, as soon as he was outside.

Nobody could tell, just then. But all said the explosions had come from the direction of the harbor, and hither, by common consent, the majority of the citizens flocked.

With the crowd went Gilbert, and from one of the wharves made out the searchlights of several Russian ships of war. Several shots had in the meanwhile been fired, but now all became as quiet as before.

“Those explosions meant something, that is certain,” said Gilbert to the hotel keeper.

“Vell, you haf been a soldier, you should know,” was the reply. “Maype dem ships vos fightin’, hey?”

“Perhaps, or a magazine at one of the forts blew up.”

The first blow in this great contest had been struck, and it had proved telling in the extreme. As

soon as the war was a certainty, Admiral Togo of the Japanese navy left Sasebo with a squadron of sixteen vessels and some torpedo boats, and steamed directly for Port Arthur. The vicinity of the port was gained on the afternoon of February 8 and at once orders went forth to torpedo every Russian warship that showed itself.

Among the Russian ships in the port at the time were the cruiser *Pallada*, and the two battleships, *Czarevitch* and *Retvizan*. The battleships were the pride of the Czar's navy, each being about thirteen thousand tons displacement, and each having a broadside fire of thirty-five hundred pounds.

The plans of the Japanese were kept carefully concealed from the enemy, and before the Russians could realize that anything was wrong that night, the three ships mentioned were torpedoed,—the torpedoes tearing great holes in their sides and bottoms.

The torpedoing of the three ships occurred while the Russian fleet, under Admiral Stark, were doing their best to keep the Japanese warships from coming too close to the city. The forts of Port Arthur also opened fire, and it was in this din and confusion that the Japanese torpedo boat destroyers slipped close in and did their deadly work. Soon after this Admiral Togo signaled his fleet to withdraw, which

they did, the darkness of the sea speedily swallowing them up.

"Well, the war has opened at last, that is certain," said Gilbert, after the excitement had somewhat subsided.

His own soldier blood was beginning to be aroused, and he half wished he could get into the fray himself.

"I rather guess Larry Russell would enjoy this," he mused, remembering how his friend had taken part in the great naval battle of Manila Bay under Admiral Dewey.

Further sleep was out of the question for the ex-lieutenant, and at early dawn he swallowed a light breakfast, and hastened once more to the water front, which was now lined everywhere with people. The excitement was at a fever heat, and it was reported that the Japanese were going to return, to bombard the city.

In his travels around Port Arthur Gilbert had stumbled across an old stone building which, in years gone by, had been used as a sort of storehouse by the Manchu rulers. The building was now practically deserted and he had no difficulty in getting inside. There was a small stone tower to the structure, and he ascended this until he reached a point where he could go outside.

The view from this elevated position was an excellent one. In front of him the inner and outer harbor of the port lay spread out as on a map, and having brought with him a good pair of field glasses he could see for miles.

"Hullo, there is certainly something wrong with those ships," he told himself, and then he saw the *Czarevitch* and the *Retvizan* settled near the harbor entrance. The *Pallada* was not so badly injured; yet her fighting days were practically over, so far as this war was concerned.

The sinking of their ships had stirred the Russian fighting blood as it had not been stirred before, and with the coming of daylight Admiral Stark's men were more than anxious to fight the Japanese vessels in the open.

The opportunity was not long in arriving. Three Japanese cruisers could be seen in the distance, and about noon the whole fleet of sixteen fighting ships hove into sight. When still three miles away they opened fire on the Russian fleet and on the forts of the harbor.

"Now they are going to have it hot and heavy," Gilbert told himself, and his prediction proved correct—the bombardment lasting over an hour. Being shelled by the Japanese ships, the Port Arthur forts replied as vigorously as they could, thus com-

pellington Admiral Togo's vessels to keep their distance. In the meantime some of the Russian ships advanced to the attack. These included the *Poltava*, *Novik*, *Askold*, and *Diana*. All of them proved to be no match for the alert Japanese, and each was so badly damaged it had to return to the harbor as speedily as possible. In this engagement the Japanese lost no ships and less than sixty men killed and wounded. What the losses were to the Russians is not known, but they must have been heavy.

To Gilbert, who had spent so much of his time as a soldier, the scene was a most absorbing one, and with his field glasses to his eyes he took careful note of every movement within sight. The booming of the ships' cannon came to him distinctly, as well as the roar of the land batteries closer at hand.

Presently some sounds below him reached his ears, and he knew that a number of persons had entered the building and were talking excitedly among themselves. He glanced over the edge of the tower and saw that the courtyard below was filled with Russian soldiers, who had just arrived in Port Arthur, and were going to make the building their temporary quarters.

"I wonder if they'll try to stop me when I go down," Gilbert asked himself, and then, hearing more firing from a land battery not far away, he

turned his attention once more to the battle. Shot and shell were flying in all directions, and the air of the harbor and the sea beyond hung heavy with black smoke.

Just behind Gilbert was a small point of the tower, built of rough stone. The young American was just wondering if he could mount this and get a still better view, when a strange noise close to his ear caused him to drop his field glasses in a hurry.

"That was a shot as sure as fate!" he muttered. "Perhaps I had better get out of here!"

For a moment he stood undecided, but then his courage returned, and he gazed once more at the scene before him. A Japanese cruiser was pounding one of the Russian ships at a lively rate and he was unwilling to miss the exhibition.

Thinking to get a better view from another part of the tower, Gilbert started to walk in that direction. He had scarcely taken two steps when he heard a crash overhead, and in a twinkling a mass of stones and dirt came tumbling down around him. A stray cannon ball had hit the point of the tower, and the missile must have passed within a few feet of the young American's head.

The stray shot was a most unexpected one, and Gilbert cannot be blamed if he dodged and thought of running away. Some of the stones hit him, and



THE STRAY SHOT WAS A MOST UNEXPECTED ONE. — *Page 50.*

the dirt filled his eyes, but he was not seriously hurt.

"Reckon I had best get out of here," he told himself, and started to go below, when a voice from the inside of the tower startled him.

"There is somebody up here," came in Russian.
"That American they told us about!"

CHAPTER VI

AN ESCAPE AND A FIGHT

FROM the tone of the speaker Gilbert realized that he had a rough individual with whom to deal. But it was too late to back out or hide, and he faced the man boldly. He proved to be a corporal, and behind him were several Russian privates, all in heavy winter uniforms, for the day was stinging cold.

"What are you doing up here?" demanded the corporal.

"I was looking at the battle," answered Gilbert.

"Who gave you permission to come in this building?"

"Nobody, but as I found it wide open I thought there would be no harm in coming in."

The corporal muttered several words Gilbert did not catch. Then he turned to the privates behind him.

"See that this man does not get away," he said.

"Do you mean to say that you are going to detain me?" cried the young American. He did not

like the appearance of the Russians, or the black looks they gave him.

"And why not? For all we know you may be a spy," and the corporal leered suspiciously at Gilbert.

"I am no spy."

"Have you been making signals from this tower?"

"No."

"Then why was that shot fired at you?"

"I don't know anything about that. If I was signaling to the Japanese, do you think they'd fire at me?"

"The shot may have come from one of our forts. Come down at once."

Evidently the Russian corporal was afraid another shot might imperil his own safety, and he hustled Gilbert down to the lower floor of the building without ceremony. As soon as the American appeared there was a cry of astonishment from all of the soldiers.

"What is he doing here?"

"Is he the American who aided those Japanese?"

"Let us make an example of him! We want no traitors in Port Arthur!"

So the talk ran on, and for the moment it looked as if Gilbert would suffer bodily violence. But then

a rather pleasant-looking Russian captain stalked up, and pushed his men back.

"Not so fast, men," he said, quietly but firmly. "This American may mean no harm after all."

"But it is known that he has helped the Japanese," said one.

"He was put out of his hotel for so doing," added another.

"I have heard he is a spy," came from a third.

"I give you my word of honor, captain, that I am not a spy," said Gilbert, when he could get the chance to speak.

"Who are you?"

"I am simply an American citizen, the selling agent for the Richmond Importing Company. We have been doing business here for several years."

"I see." The Russian captain mused for a moment. "But it is true that you aided some Japanese, yes?"

"I helped one man whom I knew personally. He was being put out of his house after paying his rent. I made the rent gatherer give the rent money back. The man was poor, and he had a sick wife and several small children depending upon him."

"Ha! I see. Well, we have no further use for the Japanese in this city, or in the whole of Manchuria, for the matter of that. They must leave and

at once. I will investigate your case more fully later. In the meantime you must remain here."

Gilbert's heart sank and for the time being he knew not how to reply. If he was made a prisoner there was no telling when he would be able to clear himself and get away. The Russian authorities might keep him locked up for weeks and even months. In the meanwhile, what would become of the *Columbia* with her valuable cargo, and what would become of his friends on board?

"They are not going to keep me a prisoner if I can help it," he told himself grimly. "I've been in a tight fix before and got out of it, and I'll get out of this one too!"

The opportunity to escape came sooner than expected. Scarcely a quarter of an hour went by when there was a commotion on the street, and word was brought in that all the Chinese and Japanese in Port Arthur were rising, to massacre the Russian citizens. The report was a false one, but it produced a terrible sensation for a couple of hours, and the Russian soldiers were called out to quell the disturbance.

In the excitement Gilbert watched his chance, and when he was not observed, he slipped from among the soldiers who surrounded him and through an open doorway into another portion of the building. From this apartment he ran into a near-by shed, and

then along a lane lined on either side by storehouses.

"Stop! stop!" he heard a Russian soldier yell, and then several shots were fired after him, none of which, however, took effect. He continued to run, and coming to a wide open storehouse, ran inside, mounted a ladder, and then laid down to hide behind a number of sacks of salt.

The ex-lieutenant thought the Russian soldiers would follow him, and such would undoubtedly have been the case had it not been for the alarm just mentioned. The alarm was close to the center of the city, and the vicinity of the storehouse in which he had hidden was all but deserted.

It must be admitted that the young American was now in a most unsettled state of mind. What to do next he did not know. He felt that he had gotten himself into "hot water" in more ways than one. Captain Barusky was against him, and so were the owner of the house in which Jiru Siko had resided, and the officer from whom he had just made his escape.

"They'll prove me a spy, or worse, if they possibly can," he thought, and drew a deep sigh. "To my way of thinking Port Arthur is getting too warm to hold me. I reckon I had best clear out and come back when this excitement is over. With this fight-

ing going on, I'll never be able to bring Ivan Snokoff and Captain Barusky to justice."

It was an easy matter to decide upon leaving Port Arthur, but how the thing was to be done was another matter. He knew that the railroad to the north was closely guarded, and so was the entire harbor front.

"If I had a good horse I might leave in the dark and ride to Dalny, or Yang-tau-wo, or some other place, and ship from there," he reasoned. "Wonder if I can buy a horse without attracting attention?"

Gilbert remained in the storehouse the best part of two hours before he thought it safe to leave it. Some soldiers had gone past and they did not return. With caution he looked out of the doorway and out of several windows to make certain that the coast was clear.

The storehouse was in a portion of the city which was new to him, and as he stepped out into the lane once more he scarcely knew how to turn. But he remembered the way he had come, and started in a direction directly opposite.

A few minutes of rapid walking brought him to a small square, on one side of which were more storehouses, and on the other a number of drinking places, and cheap lodging houses. Here were a number

of idle Russians, many the worse for liquor. To avoid them Gilbert walked past as rapidly as he could.

He had just reached the corner of a side street when three half-drunken Russian stevedores hailed him, and as he did not stop, two caught him by the arm.

"Come and be cheerful!" cried one, in a thick voice. "Don't be afraid to spend your money."

"Thank you, but I have no money to spare," answered Gilbert briefly, and attempted to pass on.

"Ho! ho! just to hear the Englishman!" cried the fellow. "For a truth I'm sure your pockets are lined with *rubles*."

"Or if not with *rubles* at least with *kopecks*," hiccoughed the second Russian. "Come, stranger, let us drink to the success of Russia."

"Aye!" put in a third. "The success of Russia, and may every dog of a Nippon lose his life in this war!"

The trio gathered closely around Gilbert, and one, the dirtiest of the lot, almost embraced the ex-lieutenant.

"I tell you, I have nothing for you!" cried Gilbert sharply. "Now let me pass."

"What, will you not drink to the success of

Russia and to the health of our Czar?" growled one of the trio.

"I told you I had no money to spare. Now let me pass," and Gilbert tried to break away and pass down the side street, for he saw that several other Russians were approaching.

The breaking out of the war, and the battle in the harbor, had made the Russian stevedores reckless, and they thought they saw a chance to get some money without working for it. At a sign from their leader they set upon Gilbert and tripped him up, so that he fell flat upon his back.

"Here, stop that!" he cried. "Stop it, I say!" And when they did not stop, but instead made movements as if to get at his watch and purse, he began to struggle violently.

As my old readers will remember, Gilbert was healthy and muscular, and it did not take him long to struggle to his feet, and send one of his assailants sprawling. Then he struck out once more, hitting a second Russian on the nose.

"Knock him down!" spluttered that individual, staggering back. "Knock him down! Hit him with a club."

By this time two others of the stevedore gang were at hand. One had a club, and he made a wicked pass for the young American's head. Fort-

unately Gilbert saw the move, and dodged just in time, so that the end of the stick merely grazed his shoulder.

The fight was now growing hot, and Gilbert backed up against a wall, hoping by this means to keep his assailants in front of him. But now all five of the Russians came at him, and he felt that sooner or later he must become their victim.

"Help! help!" he cried. "Thieves! help!"

"Be quiet!" growled one of the Russians. "Be quiet!"

"Hit him, Michael! Hit him, before he alarms the whole neighborhood!" put in another.

The fellow called Michael advanced to do as bidden. Gilbert warded off the blow once more, and then sought to wrench the stick from the stevedore's grasp. In another instant the other Russians leaped in, and down went the young American once more, with all his enemies on top of him.

CHAPTER VII

AMONG JAPANESE FRIENDS

FOR the moment it looked as if Gilbert would receive the worst of the struggle. It was true that the Russian stevedores were more than half intoxicated, but they were five to one, and now they had Gilbert flat on his back, and were both kicking and cuffing him as hard as they could.

But at this critical moment an interruption came which was as welcome to the young American as it was unexpected. From a cellar door a short distance away there issued half a dozen Japanese and two Chinese, all armed with stout sticks. Looking up and down the street, to make certain that the coast was otherwise clear, they advanced noiselessly and attacked the Russians from the rear.

A howl of pain went up as one of the Russians received a blow on the head that staggered him. Then a second was hit on the ear, a third nearly had his shoulder dislocated, and the others fared almost as badly.

"The Japanese!" shrieked one of the stevedores.
"The Japanese!"

"Stop, do not kill us!" moaned a second.

Gilbert listened to the words in amazement. Then he looked up, to behold Jiru Siko standing there, stick in hand.

"Siko!" he cried. "This is fortunate!"

"Come, Master Pennington," was the low answer. "Make quick walk, no make quick walk more Russians come—make much hurry!" And he bent down and caught Gilbert by the arm.

The ex-lieutenant needed no second bidding, and as quickly as he could he arose to his feet. The Japanese took him by the arm and hurried him toward the cellar stairs. In the meantime the others continued to fight, and the Russian stevedores received a sound thrashing. But now one blew a whistle, a signal for the others of the gang to which he belonged.

Gilbert went down the cellar steps and Jiru Siko and his friends came after him. Then the cellar door was shut down and hooked fast. All was so dark Gilbert could not for the moment see anything.

"Come, Jiru Siko show the way," said the Japanese, and hurried the young American forward through the gloom. They passed across the cellar

and into a passageway that was utterly black. All the party followed a moment later, and Gilbert heard a stout wooden door close and heard the bolts as they were shot into place.

When the young American finally emerged from the passageway he found himself covered with dust and cobwebs. He was in a small stone room, almost entirely underground. Overhead was a storehouse, and beyond this the water front.

The room was filled with Japanese and Chinese, and back of it was another room containing a number of women and children, including Jiru Siko's family. It was a foul-smelling place, damp and unwholesome, but to these conditions Gilbert did not pay attention.

"I must thank you for coming to my assistance," said Gilbert, as he caught his Japanese friend by the hand. "You came in the nick of time."

"No forget what Master Pennington do for Jiru Siko," was the answer. "Very good man, Russians very bad mans—like to fight Russians all time!" And then the Japanese wanted to know if Gilbert was seriously hurt.

"No hurts of any consequence," said the young American, after an inspection. "I got two or three cracks I didn't like, but that was all. But if you hadn't come up as you did, I don't know how I

should have fared. How did you happen to see me?"

"Go out for something to eat," was the reply. The Japanese did not add that he and his followers had intended to confiscate some goods in one of the storehouses near there, yet such was a fact. All of the party needed food, and, as the war had now begun, they considered that a perfectly legitimate way of getting what was wanted.

It was thought by some that the Russians would try to get into the cellar and follow up those who had attacked them. But when more of the stevedores arrived those who had first set upon Gilbert were too dazed to point out the way by which the young American and his friends had escaped.

One of the Japanese had been left on guard, and at length he came back with word that the Russians had gone off to a neighboring drinking resort.

"But they say they will hunt out the American," said he. "And also hunt out us who aided him. One of the Russians said the American must be a leader among us and ought to be hung."

This last bit of information was dismaying to Gilbert. Like a flash he realized that his troubles were growing deeper and deeper.

"First, it was Captain Barusky and that fellow who had me put out of the hotel, then it was that

officer who caught me on the tower, and now it is the crowd who think I am a leader of these Japs," was what he told himself. "If they catch me, I reckon they'll do all they can to make me a Russian prisoner of war."

The Japanese and Chinese knew how Gilbert had stood up for Jiru Siko and his family, and they told him they would do all in their power for the young American.

"I am afraid I'll have to keep out of sight of the Russian authorities for the present," said the ex-lieutenant. And he did what he could to explain the situation. They listened with keen interest to his story, and at the conclusion said, if he would remain with them, they would do their utmost to protect him.

"Got better room for American," said one, and after a consultation with Jiru Siko led the way along another passageway and up a narrow and dirty flight of stairs to a small apartment in the rear of a Chinese furniture shop. The shop had been closed ever since the first bombardment in the harbor, and many of the goods had been carried away.

The apartment was small but clean and had one narrow window, overlooking some sheds which lined the upper harbor entrance. Gilbert was told

he could remain there as long as he pleased, and the Japanese and Chinese would see to it that he did not suffer for the want of food.

The fighting in the harbor had now come to an end, and only the occasional distant booming of a cannon could be heard. Satisfied with sinking or disabling the flower of the Russian navy located at Port Arthur, Admiral Togo left the vicinity, fearful that sooner or later the fire from the forts might reach him. This fire had been incessant, but the aim of the Russian gunners had been poor and but little damage had been done.

Sitting down on a stool near the window, which was tightly closed to keep out the cold air, Gilbert gave himself up to his reflections. His mind was in a tumult, and for some time he could scarcely straighten out his thoughts.

The sudden breaking out of this war between Russia and Japan had upset all his calculations. He realized that it would be utterly useless for the present to attempt to find Ivan Snokoff, or bring that rascal and Captain Barusky to justice. He also knew it would be useless to attempt to send any message to Nagasaki or any other Japanese port, or try to get a message from the *Columbia* and those on board.

"The best thing I can do is to get out of Man-

churia just as quickly as possible," was the conclusion he reached. "These Russians feel sure I am friendly to the Japanese, and that being so they'll handle me without gloves, if I let them catch me. They are forcing me to become an enemy in self-defense."

From the window Gilbert could see a distant body of Russian soldiers marching through the streets, on their way from the railroad station to their barracks.

"They must be expecting the Japanese to attack them," he thought. "Certainly they can't be thinking of sending an army to Japan." His surmise proved correct; and the attack came not long after, as history has proved.

Towards the middle of the afternoon Jiru Siko appeared, along with one of the Chinamen who owned an interest in the furniture shop. They brought with them something hot to eat and to drink, for which Gilbert was thankful, for, as we know, he had had nothing whatever since early morning.

"Whole town fill up with Russian soldiers," announced Jiru Siko. "Soldiers in streets, soldiers in houses, soldiers all over. No Japanese show him face—make much trouble."

"I reckon you'll have to get out, Siko," answered

the young American. "But how you are going to do it, I don't know."

"What Master Pennington going to do?"

"I'm going to get out, too—if I can. But I don't want to show myself to the Russians."

"Want to sail on ship?"

"I don't know of any other way to get out. The Russians hold the railroad from end to end."

"No ship sail from Port Arthur—mean no Japanese ship—big guns from fort smash bang!"

"I know that as well as you do."

"Master Pennington want to go with Jiru Siko?"

"Where to?"

"Nagasaki."

"How are you going to get to Nagasaki?"

"Got big sailboat—sail in two, three days—when weather is fine."

"Not from here?"

"No! no! sailboat some miles from here. Go away from Port Arthur in dark—walk or ride in dark—come where boat is, wait for good time go away. Master Pennington come, we do best we can for him."

"Jiru Siko, you are a true friend if ever there was one!" ejaculated Gilbert, catching the brown

hand of the little Japanese. "How soon do you expect to start from here?"

"To-morrow night."

"I'd like to get my traveling bag, if not my trunk."

The Japanese looked puzzled for a moment.

"Bad work get bag, Russians look for Master Pennington at hotel—keep spy, get bag, catch quick, maybe."

"You mean they may have a spy watching for my return?"

Jiru Siko nodded. "All city full of spies now," he added.

"I believe you. Nevertheless, I'll see if I can't get the bag and a few other things. Herr Schaumberg will do what he can for me, I know."

The matter was talked over for a short while longer, and then it was decided that Gilbert should try to reach the German hotel as soon as it got dark. He was to get back to the Chinese furniture shop by the following evening, and then set out with Jiru Siko and some others for the ship.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE GERMAN HOTEL

Now that Gilbert was about to leave Port Arthur he was anxious to see what he could of the preparations for war, and when he left the furniture shop at dark he did not move directly for Herr Schaumburg's hotel, but took a circuitous route which brought him near to some of the forts.

That the Russians were doing all in their power to render the port safe against an attack there could be no doubt. Every fort was being strengthened, and from the talk of some soldiers he learned that some hills behind the town were likewise being fortified.

"They are afraid the Japs will land and come up in the city's rear," he told himself, and this was the truth. The work of fortifying Port Arthur went on day and night for a long while, and great quantities of stores were brought in, to use in case of a siege.

By the time Gilbert reached the vicinity of the German hotel it was long after dark. He did not

go to the front entrance, but took to an alleyway on the left which led to some stables in the rear. This brought him past a window of the private dining room and there he saw Herr Schaumberg and his wife and three children sitting at the table, partaking of their evening meal.

The ex-lieutenant felt that he could trust the German, but he was not so sure of Frau Schaumberg, who, it will be remembered, was of Russian birth. It was possible the lady had relatives in the Russian army, and it would be a feather in their cap if the American was caught by them.

The meal in the private dining room was about over, and presently Gilbert saw the hotel keeper get up and put on his hat. Then he came out of a side door and walked towards the stables.

"Herr Schaumberg!" Gilbert called softly, and hurried toward the man.

"Who vos it?" queried the hotel keeper, coming to a halt, and peering into the darkness. "Vell, I neffer! I dink you vos no comin' pack no more, Mr. Bennington."

"What made you think that?"

"I hear dem say you vos a schpy. Dem Roossian soldiers vos after you, not so?"

"I reckon they are after me, Herr Schaumberg. But I have done no wrong."

"Den you vos hafe lots of droubles for noddings, hey?"

"That's the size of it. But I haven't time to talk. I want my bag and some other things, and I want to pay you. Will it be safe for me to go to my room?"

"I dink me not—chust yet. You see, mine *frau* she vos a Roossian, an' she ton't like you mooch on dat account."

"I suspected as much."

"You come py der stable. I vill tell you ven you can come into der hotel," went on Herr Schaumberg.

In a minute more Gilbert was in the stable, and sitting in a room used for storing harness. The grooms were gone, so there was no danger from that source.

"Now I go pack to der hotel," said Herr Schaumberg, after he had looked to see if the horses had been properly cared for for the night. "Chust you vait here bis I come again, hey?"

"How long will I have to wait?"

"Besser vait bis mine *frau* she go to ped. Dat is apout an hour."

"Very well, I'll wait."

While he was left to himself, Gilbert pondered over what he should take along and what was to be

left behind. He could not be too heavily burdened, for the journey to the ship might be a hard one, and Jiru Siko had told him that nobody was to carry much baggage. Scarcely an hour had gone by when the hotel keeper returned.

"Mine *frau* she vos sleepy," said he, with a good-natured grin. "I told her besser go py der ped an' she go. Come now, an' don't make so mooch noise like a fly."

He went on ahead, out of the stable, across a small courtyard, and into the hotel by a back door. Gilbert had hold of his arm, and made no noise whatever, since his shoes were protected by heavy winter rubbers. They passed up a dark stairway and through the upper hall.

"Here vos your room," said the hotel proprietor. "Shall I vait for you or come pack?"

"You can wait if you wish—I'll not be long," answered the ex-lieutenant.

A light was lit, and Gilbert brought forth his trunk and his traveling bag. Having decided what to take and what to leave behind, it was an easy matter to pack the bag, and inside of fifteen minutes the task was done. Then Gilbert settled his bill.

"I'll have to leave the trunk here," said he. "Will you take care of it until you hear from me again?"

"Mit bleasure, Mr. Bennington. I vos sorry you haf to git owid like dis."

"It is not my fault. The Russians are treating me very unjustly." Gilbert shut his teeth hard. "I've got a score to settle with them for it."

"I ton't vos plame you. Put I can't say nod-dings. Of I do, I got me into droubles, hey?"

"I reckon so." Gilbert paused and glanced around the room. "I may as well be going now. Good-by, and much obliged for what you have done for me."

The light was put out, and the pair passed again into the dark hallway, Herr Schaumberg having left the lights unlit on purpose. Gilbert now carried his bag, which was by no means light in weight.

The back stairs were just gained, when there came sounds from the main room of the hotel. Some new arrivals had just come in. Leaving Gilbert, Herr Schaumberg ran to the front stairway, and glanced down to the floor below.

"Dere vos some Roossian soldiers dare!" he whispered, as he came running back. "You vos besser get owid kvick!"

"I will," answered Gilbert. "Good-by. Don't say anything about me." And in another instant he was descending the back stairs two steps at a time.

All might have gone well with the ex-lieutenant had not something occurred upon which neither he nor Herr Schaumberg had calculated. Sneaking into the back door of the hotel at that moment was one of the servants, who had gone out for a walk unknown to her master or mistress.

As Gilbert landed at the foot of the stairs he came upon the girl with a suddenness that sent her flying against a kitchen door. The breath was almost knocked out of her, yet she immediately let out a yell of terror.

"Help! help!" she screamed in German. "Help! Who is this? A robber!"

"Excuse me," murmured Gilbert. "Sorry, but I didn't see you," and, slipping past the girl, he opened the door into the courtyard.

"A robber! A robber!" shrieked the girl, and continued to cry out until she had aroused the whole household. All came running to the spot, and with them the Russian soldiers that had just arrived.

"Vot is it, Bena?" questioned Herr Schaumberg, although he knew only too well.

"A robber!" wailed the girl. "He knocked me down! He wanted to murder me!"

"I saw nobody," answered the hotel keeper. "You must be mistaken." He was now addressing the girl in German.

"No, no, I saw him, Herr Schaumberg, indeed I did!"

"How did he look?" The hotel keeper thought to gain time for Gilbert by asking a number of questions.

"I could not see very well, it was so dark."

"Perhaps it was Frederick the stableman."

"No, it was a stranger, and he carried a hand-bag."

"And are you sure you are not dreaming?"

"Yes, I am sure. I saw him with my two eyes. Oh, how he scared me. I shall never get over it, never!"

"Perhaps it was that good-for-nothing American," came from Frau Schaumberg, who had just come from her room. "Run to his room and see if his things are still there."

Now this was just what her husband did not wish, but he did not dare to say so.

"Very well, we will look," said he. "Where is the key?"

"I have it not, Carl. Perhaps it is in the office."

"Or he took it with him," answered the hotel keeper, who had the key in his pocket. "Wait till I look."

He hurried to the office, dropping the key in

the hall on the way. His wife came after him, followed by the frightened servant.

"I see no key here," said Herr Schaumberg, after looking around.

"Better break down the door of the room," put in one of the soldiers. "We came in to look for that fellow."

"Very well, we can do that," said the hotel keeper. "But wait till I make a light."

The hall was lit up, and then the hotel keeper, not wishing to have the door injured, pretended to stumble over the key.

"Here it is!" he cried.

"Ha! the fellow must have thrown it there!" cried Frau Schaumberg, in triumph. "Now look into the room at once!"

The door was thrown open and all crowded into the apartment. The trunk was in a corner, locked and strapped.

"The bag is gone!" shrieked the lady of the house. "He has been here, beyond any question! He it was who knocked Bena down! Oh, the rascal! the robber! And to think we thought he was such a fine gentleman!"

"He appeared to be all right," said the hotel keeper slowly.

"I distrusted him from the start," sniffed the

wife. She turned to the soldiers. "What shall you do now?"

"We'll go after him," declared the corporal who was in command. "Take good care that he does not come back and get that trunk," he added grimly.

"You will take charge of it later?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you had better look around the room first," interposed Herr Schaumberg. "You may get some clew to where he is going."

The hotel keeper knew well enough that Gilbert had left no clew behind him, but, as said before, he wanted to give the young American all the time possible in which to make good his escape. Gilbert's frank manner had pleased him from the start, and, for reasons of his own, he bore no good feeling towards the soldiers of the Czar.

The suggestion to search the room was carried out, but nothing of importance was found, even in the trunk, which was smashed open with a hatchet.

"It's no use wasting time here," said the corporal at last. "Come, the quicker we get on his trail the better."

"Yes! yes!" came from Frau Schaumberg. "And I trust with all my heart you capture him."

“Oh, we are sure to do that, sooner or later. Every road out of Port Arthur is guarded, so he cannot get away from the city. If we don't locate him anywhere else, we'll probably root him out from some nest of Japanese or Chinese.”

CHAPTER IX

GILBERT LEAVES PORT ARTHUR

ONCE in the courtyard of the German hotel, Gilbert did not stop to consider the situation. He knew that the Russian soldiers were in front of the place, and his only chance of safety lay in flight to the rear.

Running as rapidly as he could with the satchel, which was tightly packed and heavy, he passed to one side of the stables, and entered a small alleyway leading to a back street. The alleyway was littered with rubbish, and he went down twice, tearing his clothing in several places, and scratching his left hand.

"This is certainly no picnic," he muttered, as he picked himself up for the second time. "But they shan't catch me—not if I know it!"

He had the "lay of the land" fairly well in his head, and tried to take as straight a course as possible for the Chinese furniture shop. But this was not easy, for many streets in Port Arthur are crooked and end in unexpected places. More than

this, he had to be on a constant lookout for more of the Russian soldiery.

Presently he reached a street that was apparently deserted, all of the residents having gone to bed. Being now almost out of wind, he dropped into a walk.

"I reckon I've thrown them off the track," he told himself, and then, coming to the dark entrance to a shop, set his bag down to rest for a few minutes.

All was quiet in the city. Thanks to the delay occasioned by Herr Schaumberg, the Russians who had visited the German hotel had failed to get on the young American's track.

Having gotten back his wind, Gilbert picked up his bag once again. As he did this, a burly form loomed up out of the semi-darkness around a corner.

"Ho there! Stop!" came in the voice of a Russian policeman. And he strode toward Gilbert, club in hand.

Gilbert felt that it would be useless to run, for the policeman would surely shoot at him. At once he resolved to play a trick on the officer of the law.

"Thank goodness you have arrived," he gasped. "Can you catch them?"

"Catch them?" queried the policeman. "Who?"

"The men who were following me. See, there

they go, the rascals! I might have lost my bag and my money."

"Were they Chinese?"

"They must have been—it was almost too dark to see. There's another of them!"

Gilbert pointed to a distant corner with his hand and sank down as if exhausted. The policeman stared at him for an instant.

"I'll see what I can do," said the officer of the law, as he drew his pistol. "Stay here till I return," and off he went on a run.

The moment the officer had turned the corner the ex-lieutenant started on a dead run in the opposite direction. Having rested, he was able to make fairly good time, and soon put four squares between himself and the policeman. Then he dropped once again into a walk, but now kept a sharp lookout on all sides for the possible appearance of another enemy.

Before he reached the Chinese quarter of the town he heard a tramping at a distance. More soldiers had arrived, including some Cossack cavalry, who went clattering loudly over the pavements.

"So you get back, no trouble," said Jiru Siko, when he appeared. "Much glad to see dat," and the face of the little brown man showed his sincerity.

"But I had a whole lot of trouble," answered Gilbert, and told his story. "Port Arthur is altogether too hot to hold me much longer."

"Very bad—bad for American—bad for poor son of Nippon," was the reply. "Glad to go soon."

"Yes, I'll be glad to get out myself. But we'll have to be very careful, Siko."

"Yes, yes; go like mice—the Russian cat can't catch him!" And the Japanese smiled knowingly.

"Are you going to take your wife and children along?"

"Wife and chillen go already—Russians no stop women. They meet Jiru Siko on boat—other women, too—men go, you and me, altogether."

"I'm glad we won't have the women and children along. It's going to be no easy matter to get out of the city."

"I show Master Pennington trick—you watch. Now go sleep—no sleep next night—go on boat, maybe fight."

"Well, I'm tired enough to go to sleep," answered Gilbert, and in less than half an hour he was in the land of dreams, despite the dangers which surrounded him.

When Gilbert awoke it was broad daylight. Looking out of the window he saw that a light snow

was falling, which a keen, penetrating wind was blowing in several directions.

"This won't make traveling very pleasant," he thought. "But it may make it easier for us to escape."

By looking at his watch he found it was after ten o'clock, showing that he had slept much longer than usual. Getting up, he found himself as fresh as ever and tremendously hungry. He was glad to see one of the Chinamen come in with some fresh bread, coffee, and a couple of deliciously cooked chops.

"See here, John, I want to pay you for these," said he, and insisted upon giving the Celestial a *ruble*, for which the fellow was extremely grateful. The Chinese in Port Arthur had never fared well under Russian rule, and now their situation was worse than ever, for the followers of the Czar knew they would do all in their power to help the Japanese.

From the Chinaman Gilbert learned that Jiru Siko had gone off to make arrangements for leaving Port Arthur, and would not be back much before nightfall. There was nothing to do but to wait, and the young American made himself as comfortable as possible in the meantime.

It was after six o'clock when the Japanese re-

turned, and at once he and his companions held a long conference. Then he came to Gilbert.

"Go now," said he. "You got pistol?"

"Yes," was the answer, and the ex-lieutenant produced the weapon, loaded and ready for use. It had been his companion during the campaign in China, and he knew he could depend upon it.

"No shoot quick," went on Jiru Siko. "Shoot only when can't help."

"I understand, and I don't want to shoot anybody if it can be avoided," returned Gilbert.

The snow was coming down thickly, and the wind was blowing strongly when Gilbert and eight others of the party left the furniture shop. At the same time another party of seven left the quarters under the storehouse, but they went off in another direction.

The course was through a dirty, narrow street of the Chinese quarter, and then to a row of stables, where stood a number of carts piled high with boxes and intrenching tools.

"Hide in the carts," explained Jiru Siko. "Carts go out of city to-night, sure. Be careful, no noise."

He went with the young American, and in a few minutes both were secreted in one of the carts, be-

tween two packing cases loaded with ammunition. On top of them were a number of shovels and picks and over the whole a rough tarpaulin, to keep off the snow.

Once hidden in the carts, none of the party dared to speak excepting in the faintest of whispers. All waited patiently for about half an hour, when several Russian cart-drivers and hostlers appeared, bringing with them a number of horses. The men were talking in a boisterous manner, and were evidently dissatisfied with the task before them.

"We could wait until daylight just as well," grumbled one. "To drive out in such a snowstorm and on such a road is not pleasant."

"True, Pasof, but orders are orders," came from a second. "And the sooner we arrive at Chic-yang the better for us. So hurry along."

The horses were soon hooked fast to the carts, and then, mounting the seats, the drivers started up their teams with loud cracks of their whips and curses long and deep.

At the first jounce over the rough pavements Gilbert felt that the ride was to be anything but pleasant. But that shaking up was as nothing to what followed, and he had to brace himself between the boxes with all his strength to prevent some bones

from being crushed. Up and down went the cart, in and out of holes and ruts, the snow sifting in at times and down the young American's neck, in spite of the fact that he had buttoned his coat tightly around him. It was intensely cold, and soon his feet seemed to be more than half-frozen.

"How much of this have we got to stand?" he whispered to his companion.

"Not much—soon we leave city we leave cart," was Jiru Siko's answer. He was suffering as much as Gilbert, but uttered no complaint.

A moment later the cart went into a hole with a jounce that threatened to break an axle. Part of the load began to slip back, and in alarm the driver leaped down to readjust it.

The movement brought the man close to Gilbert's hiding-place, and as the end of the tarpaulin was raised the ex-lieutenant felt almost certain that he would be discovered.

But the discovery did not come, and having shoved two of the cases back into place, and re-adjusted several ropes which bound them, the driver moved on once more.

That jounce proved the last, and soon after this the cart struck a hard and fairly smooth dirt road, where riding for those in hiding was much easier.

"We out of Port Arthur now," whispered Jiru Siko. "Leave cart soon."

"What about the others?"

"They leave, too—all go to old house on road to water."

After this nothing was said for fully ten minutes. The cart was now moving along at a fair rate of speed, and the driver was puffing away contentedly at a short pipe between his teeth, and paying scant attention to the load behind.

"Now we go," whispered Jiru Siko, and worked his way noiselessly to the rear of the cart. Gilbert went with him, and in a moment more both dropped into the road. Then, hand in hand, they ran out of sight in the darkness, and the cart rumbled on, the driver never once suspecting that he had been carrying passengers.

The house the Japanese had in mind was a good half mile away. The road lay over a barren field, now covered with several inches of snow.

"It is certainly cold to-night," said Gilbert, when he felt at liberty to speak. "We'll have no fun of it when we reach the water front."

"Cold make Russians stay in by fire," answered his companion. "No see us—so better for boat."

"That is true, but—— What does that mean?"

Gilbert broke off short as a pistol shot rang out at a distance. Then came a yell in Russian, followed by a cry of alarm in Japanese.

"Somebody found out!" cried Jiru Siko.
"Come, we must run now, or get caught sure!"

CHAPTER X

AT SEA IN A SNOW SQUALL

THE Japanese was right, two of the party in another cart had been discovered just at the moment they were leaving the turnout. In alarm the Russian driver ordered them to stop, and then called to another cart-driver for assistance.

The cry uttered by the Japanese was given in order to warn their friends. Now they came rushing across the field, closely followed by others of the party. On the road the Russians continued to give the alarm, and an instant later several shots were fired, one striking a Japanese in the arm. The fellow wanted to open fire in return, but Jiru Siko told him he had better not, as that would only add to the excitement and call forward more of the Russians.

With his heavy bag Gilbert had all he could do to keep up with the Japanese, although several of them carried loads fully as heavy as, if not heavier than, his own. The little brown men seemed to be all bone and muscle, and sprinted over the snow-covered ground in a manner that was wonderful.

Lights were now flashing forth from several directions, and soon came a shot from a distant sentry, answered by a similar shot from another sentry. The location of these shots was carefully noted by both Jiru Siko and Gilbert.

"This is the road between," said the ex-lieutenant, and the Japanese nodded, to show that he agreed. The way led past the house Jiru Siko had in mind to visit, and there they were joined by all of the others who had left Port Arthur but a short while before.

Not far from the house was a patch of dwarfed timber and into this the Japanese and Gilbert dashed. One of the number appeared to be familiar with the ground and he led the way, the others following in single file. They went over a small hill and across a pond covered with ice and snow, where two slipped and went flat on their backs. Then they mounted some rocks, swept clear of the snow by the wind, and came out on a road which followed the seacoast.

By this time the whole party had been running an hour, and it must be confessed that Gilbert was beginning to lose his wind. But the Japanese kept on without slacking their pace, and there was nothing for him to do but to keep up or be left behind.

"Those fellows are wonderful runners," he

thought, and then he remembered how the Japanese soldiers had pressed forward when the cry was, "On to Pekin!" He felt certain that if the Japanese army ever landed in Manchuria, they would give the Russians some hard marching and fighting. How true this surmise proved we shall see later.

It was nearly four in the morning when the party reached a spot where there was a sandy beach with a small inlet. Here was a rude boathouse, which was apparently deserted.

As they came up to the boathouse Jiru Siko drew from his clothing two small rockets. Sticking one in the snow he set it off, and then gazed anxiously out to sea, his companions doing likewise.

A few minutes passed, and then, through the swirling snow, they saw the flare of an answering rocket. At once all ran along the beach and leaped into two rowboats lying there.

It was a hazardous thing to do, for the seacoast was lined with floating cakes of ice. But the Japanese did not hesitate, nor did Gilbert, for all felt that the alarm on the road would speedily lead to an investigation, and the trail through the snow was a fairly plain one. The young American seized an oar with the rest and pulled as sturdily as anybody.

At last the two rowboats were well away from the shore, and then those on board began to search

once more for the ship whence the answering rocket had been seen. They saw a light behind them and knew that the Russians were already on the trail.

A half-hour passed, and in the whirling snow it looked as if they had missed the ship entirely and would be at the mercy of the elements. Gilbert was fearfully cold, and so worn out with running and rowing that he could scarcely sit up.

Seeing that there was no help for it, Jiru Siko lit his second rocket. Hardly had it gone up into the air when a gun boomed out, and a solid shot went whistling over their heads.

"If we are struck we'll go to the bottom sure," thought Gilbert, and gave a shiver, for the thought of such an icy grave was not a pleasant one.

The first shot was followed by a second, and then a third. But these flew still further away, and then all aboard the small boats breathed easier.

At last came a shout, which was quickly answered by the Japanese. They saw the light of several lanterns, and waved a small light in return. Then there loomed up in the darkness the form of a fair-sized Japanese sailing craft, with several sails set. These were speedily lowered, and in a moment more the two rowboats drew alongside.

There was some danger of the rowboats being swamped, for the sea was running strongly. But

with the aid of the sailors on the larger craft all in the rowboats were transferred to the deck of the big vessel. Then one of the rowboats was also taken aboard, and the other cast adrift, and the sailing ship proceeded on her course to the south-east.

The Japanese ship was named the *O-Taka*, which means *The Hawk*. She was a fairly comfortable vessel, broad of beam, and with sailing qualities better than ordinary. Her captain, a keen-eyed Japanese named Toyano, had served in the war between Japan and China years before, and had an abnormal hatred of the Russians. He knew that he was in dangerous waters, but laughed to scorn the anxiety of the sailors under him.

"We can show them a clear stern," said he, in his native tongue. "And if a steamship comes close we can give them a taste of a sailor's muscle and shooting qualities."

On board of the *O-Taka* were Jiru Siko's family and also the families of several other Japanese refugees. The women and smaller children were crowded into the cabin of the ship, while their belongings were either thrown into the hold or lashed fast in a heap on the deck. Everybody on board was Japanese but Gilbert, and many gazed curiously at the young American. He was introduced to the

captain, who told him to make himself at home as best he could.

"You will have to rough it with us," said he. "I can offer you no stateroom, since those are given to the women and children. And should we fall afoul of a Russian warship all of us will have to take what comes."

"I've roughed it many times before," answered Gilbert, with a quiet smile. "As a soldier I served in Cuba, Luzon, and in China."

"Good! Then you are no stranger to war. I am glad to meet you," and Captain Toyano shook hands once more. "Jiru Siko tells me they took you for a spy in Port Arthur."

"They did, and I am running away now to escape being put into a Russian prison just for nothing at all!"

"In that case you must sympathize with us Japanese?" And the captain bent a penetrating glance upon the ex-lieutenant.

"I certainly do not sympathize with the Russians," returned Gilbert bluntly. "They have caused me a good lot of trouble, and now it looks as if I, or rather the company I represent, was going to lose a lot of money through them." And here Gilbert told as much of his tale as he thought the ship's commander would care to hear.

As soon as those who were in the rowboats were taken on board every light on the deck was extinguished and a little later all of the sails were hoisted. Running in such absolute darkness was dangerous, but no more so than to show a light and thus invite a shot from one of the forts or from a Russian man-o'-war. Two men were kept at the bow, each doing his best to see what was ahead, and thus give warning of danger, should any appear.

By daybreak the snowstorm was over, and at ten o'clock in the morning the sun came out brightly, making it much warmer than it had been. The *O-Taka* was now out of sight of land, and steering a straight course for the southern extremity of Korea and for Nagasaki, about two hundred miles beyond. The wind was favorable, and with every sail set the vessel plowed through the waters of the Yellow Sea with surprising swiftness.

Roughly estimated, the sailing distance from Port Arthur to Nagasaki is almost seven hundred miles, the route being past the Shan-tung Promontory and Quelpart Island. Of course, much depends upon the winds, which are highly variable in these quarters, but the captain of the *O-Taka* expected to make the trip inside of a week, unless the weather proved unusually foul.

The one anxiety on board was concerning pro-

visions. It had been impossible to procure anything in the shape of meat or vegetables, and the quantity of rice, flour, and salt fish was limited, as was also the quantity of drinking water. Everybody was put on short rations from the start. At this the Japanese refugees did not grumble, being satisfied to get away from their enemy at any cost, and Gilbert had sense enough likewise to remain silent.

With all their hardships the Japanese were a cheerful lot, and frequently beguiled the time by singing, and by playing on several stringed instruments which had been brought along. One comic song of the day, called "The Man Who Sailed on a Whale," was a great favorite, especially with the children. The national songs were also sung, the sailors joining in the refrains with a will.

Three days passed, and only some distant sails were sighted, none of which attempted to draw near them. Once the lookout detected a great smoke to the northeast, and this smoke was thought to come from the funnels of Russian warships. At once the course was changed due south, and soon the smoke was left behind.

So far since the snowstorm the weather had been fine, but on the night of the third day the atmosphere grew heavy, and by midnight the snow was coming down once more in heavy flakes, which all

but obliterated the view on all sides of the ship. The lookouts were doubled, and as the wind increased, the sails were slightly trimmed.

"This is not so pleasant," said Gilbert to Jiru Siko, as both turned out in the morning.

"One must take the copper with the silver," responded the Japanese. "Lucky to get away from Russians—sink ship, what we do den, you say?"

"I don't know that I can say anything," laughed the young American. "More than likely we'd go to Davy Jones's locker."

"What locker dat? I don't know him," and the little brown man looked puzzled.

"I mean the bottom of the sea. American sailors call it Davy Jones's locker."

"Ah! Dat so, him Davy Jones got mighty big locker—all same full whales and many fish," and Jiru Siko laughed at his little joke, and Gilbert laughed with him.

Breakfast had been served, and Gilbert was strolling toward the bow of the ship when one of the lookouts gave a sudden cry:

"A ship! A ship!"

He was right, and a second later a big warship loomed up directly in front of the sailboat. The warship was coming forward at a good rate of speed, sending the spray flying in all directions.



"WE'LL BE RUN DOWN!" CRIED GILBERT. — *Page 99.*

“We’ll be run down!” cried Gilbert, and this cry was taken up on all sides. Then came a cry from the big ship, and they heard the churning of the water as the engines were reversed. But the forward movement of the warship was scarcely slackened, and it looked as if in a moment more there would be a collision, and the sailboat would be sunk.

CHAPTER XI

AN ORDER TO LAY-TO

As the big warship came nearer and nearer those on board of the sailboat increased their cries. But the large vessel was doing all in her power to back water, and could do no more. She had been running at her highest rate of speed and her headway was therefore tremendous.

The only thoroughly cool men on the *O-Taka* were the captain and the steersman, the latter a salt of many years' experience. The former issued orders with rapidity, and the steersman obeyed "on the jump." Then the sailors were ordered to shift one of the sails, and just as the warship was almost upon them, the sailboat sheered off sharply to one side; and the danger was over.

"Well, that was a close shave!" muttered Gilbert. "A little closer and we would have been cut in two as if by a knife!"

For several minutes the sailboat continued to rock in the swells created by the larger vessel. In the midst of this came an order through a megaphone to lay-to.

At first sight of the warship all on board of the *O-Taka* wondered if she was not Russian, in which case it would have fared badly with Captain Toyano and all with him. But now it was seen that it was one attached to the Japanese navy, and was carrying a number of soldiers as well as sailors.

"What ship?" was asked in Japanese.

"The *O-Taka*, from Nagasaki," replied Captain Toyano, making a trumpet of his hands.

"Did you come from that port last?"

"No, we came from Port Arthur."

"Continue to lay-to until we inspect you," was the short and sharp command.

"I will do so."

No more was said, and in a few minutes a boat was lowered at the side of the warship, and an under-officer entered with eight sailors. In ten minutes the officer was on the deck of the *O-Taka*, and Captain Toyano greeted him cordially.

"Inspect as you will," said the captain. And then he told how he had come to pick up those on board and of the escape from the Russians at Port Arthur.

"You were fortunate to get away," said the Japanese naval officer. "One good shot would have sunk you instantly." He gazed at Gilbert. "Who is this Englishman?"

"He is an American, a representative of an importing company that was doing business in Manchuria. He wanted to get away, and so we took him along."

"He is not a spy?"

"I am sure he is not. But you can question him, if you wish."

"I will."

Gilbert was called up, and the naval officer put half a dozen pointed questions to him, all of which he answered satisfactorily.

"You consider yourself a non-combatant?" said the officer, at last.

"For the present, yes, but I'm half of a mind to throw in my fortunes with Japan."

"Indeed. Do you think you would like to fight?"

"Yes, under certain circumstances. I've done my share of it. I served in Cuba, Luzon, and at the Boxer uprising in China, first as a volunteer, and then as a lieutenant of the regulars."

"Is it possible! I am pleased to meet you, Lieutenant Pennington." The naval officer shook hands. "We have quite a number of Americans in our army and navy."

"I knew you had some of our gunners on your ships."

"Yes—more than perhaps you imagine—they flocked in as soon as they heard war was expected."

"Well, if I ever fight again, it will be as a soldier. I prefer the land."

"Well, we need soldiers. We are already landing troops in Korea to march against the Russians at the north." And here the conversation came to a close. Soon the under-officer left and the *O-Taka* was permitted to proceed once more on her course, while the warship put on full steam and soon disappeared in the swirling snow.

What the under-officer had said about landing troops in Korea was true, and while the *O-Taka* is speeding on her way we will take a brief glance backward, and see how the first shot in this great war between Russia and Japan came to be fired.

On the west coast of Korea is the harbor and town of Chemulpo, a place of considerable importance, with a valuable shipping interest. About the time when negotiations at St. Petersburg were broken off there were in the harbor two Russian warships, a fine protected cruiser of 6500 tons, named the *Varyag*, and an old-style gunboat, called the *Koriets*, of use mainly for coast defense.

On the eighth of February a Russian boat carry-

ing army and navy stores arrived at Chemulpo and reported having sighted a number of warships at a distance. The ships were supposed to be Japanese, and to make certain the commander of the *Korietz* went out to reconnoiter. The approaching ships proved to be a Japanese squadron under command of Admiral Uriu. The squadron consisted of a battleship, four cruisers, and seven torpedo boats, all of which were acting as a convoy to a number of transports carrying twenty-five hundred Japanese soldiers.

At the sight of the enemy the old *Korietz* was cleared for action, and a gun fired—whether as a signal to lay-to, or as an opening shot of war, is not definitely settled. But be that as it may, the shot was immediately answered by the Japanese, who discharged two torpedoes at the presumptuous old gunboat. Seeing this, the *Korietz* lost no time in returning to the protection of Chemulpo harbor.

Night was now coming on, and under cover of the darkness the Japanese transports succeeded in making a landing, and all of the Japanese soldiers went ashore. As soon as they were in a position to resist a possible attack, the Japanese squadron steamed out to sea.

It is possible that those on the Russian warships thought they would be free of their enemy, but early

in the morning came a communication from Admiral Uriu, stating that war between the two nations had been declared, and that the Russian ships must either come out on the high seas and fight or be attacked where they lay in the harbor.

"Weak as we are, we will go out and fight them," said the Russian commander, who must be admired for his great bravery, and not long after this the *Varyag* steamed out, followed by the old *Koriets*. Those on board knew that they were going almost to certain doom, yet they put on a brave front, the band playing church hymns and the national anthem, and the jackies singing lustily.

With such an advantage on one side the fight could not long endure, and within half an hour the *Varyag*, trying in vain to inflict damage on her more numerous enemy, was riddled with shot and shell and set on fire. The old *Koriets*, hardly noticed by the Japanese warships, was also struck, and at last both steamed back to the harbor, where the wounded and dying were cared for. That neither ship might fall into the possession of the enemy, the *Varyag* was scuttled, and the *Koriets* blown up. The Russian transport that had first sighted the enemy was burned.

The coast was now clear for landing all the troops the Mikado cared to send to Korea, and the

squadron steamed away to convoy more transports hither. How this work went on we shall learn in the near future.

Instead of abating the snowstorm increased in violence, and by ten o'clock that night the wind was blowing a perfect gale. In that quarter of the Yellow Sea a gale means something, and the *O-Taka* was tossed about like a feather on the high rolling waves. Many of the women and children on board were sick, and even some of the men suffered.

"Very much bad storm," sighed Jiru Siko, to Gilbert. "Ship look he would turn down side up—all things go hop-hop in cabin—Jiru Siko go hop-hop inside—he think he going to lose his liver."

"You're seasick, Siko," answered the young American. "You can't stand the rolling of the ship."

"Master Pennington not feel hop-hop inside, no turn inside out on his liver?"

"No, I am thankful to say that I don't feel sick a bit."

"You strong man—wish Jiru Siko feel dat way—give a *yen* to feel so!" A *yen* is a Japanese dollar, worth about fifty-five cents of our money.

The captain had already ordered most of the sails lowered, only keeping up sufficient canvas to make

the *O-Taka* mind her helm. The sea was boiling and foaming on all sides, and the rising and falling wind shrieked dismally through the rigging, now at a high note and then at a low. To stand on the deck without holding fast was impossible, and the little cabin was crowded to suffocation. There it was uncomfortably warm, but outside it was bitter cold, the water forming in sheets of ice on the deck and in long icicles on the sails and rigging.

"How long do you think this blow will last?" asked Gilbert, when Captain Toyano happened to pass him.

"I cannot tell, certainly until morning—perhaps for twenty-four hours longer."

"Can we weather it, do you think?"

"I have never yet lost a ship, Mr. Pennington."

This is all the Japanese commander would say. But it was plain to see that he was worried, and with good cause.

Just before the outbreak of the war he had intended to lay the *O-Taka* up for repairs, for the vessel was rather old, and needed her seams looked after, and a new topmast, as well as some new sails. But the opportunity for making such repairs had been lost, and now the ship was handicapped in a fashion which left her ill-suited to fight out the storm that was raging.

The sailors knew of the trouble, but the captain did not wish to alarm his passengers, and so told them nothing. The *O-Taka* was already shipping much water, and the pump was kept going continuously.

Sleep for all on board was out of the question, and the most Gilbert could do was to lash himself fast to a railing near the lee of the cabin. Jiru Siko had joined his family, but others of the Japanese refugees were close at hand, doing what they could to keep their blood in circulation, and a few praying to their gods that daybreak might still find them in the land of the living.

It was about three in the morning when the worst of the blow was felt. The wind shrieked with increased fury, and in the midst of this came a report like that of a cannon. The mainmast of the ship had broken off about six feet above deck. Down it came, partly over the bow, carrying a railing, some spars, and a great mass of rigging and canvas with it. At once the ship veered around and came up sideways to the fury of the high-running sea.

But little could be heard in such a wind, yet Captain Toyano made his men understand what was best to do, and while some held life-lines, others chopped away the wreckage with axes. Then the *O-Taka*

gave a sudden lurch, and the broken mast, with spars, rigging, and sails, slipped overboard and out of sight in the darkness. Soon the ship righted herself, and those handling her did what they could to keep her up to the wind.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE LAND OF THE MORNING CALM

By daybreak the worst of the blow was over, and shortly before noon the snow ceased to fall, and the sun began to struggle through the clouds. Still it was bitterly cold and those on deck had to keep muffled up. As it was, one of the sailors had had a hand frozen during the night and several were suffering from nipped noses and ears. The blood in Gilbert's left foot refused to circulate properly and that member felt as if half dead.

The storm had opened the seams of the vessel worse than ever, and the sailors had all they could do to keep the craft from becoming water-logged. The pump was in constant use, one gang of pumpers relieving another, and in addition some water was drawn from the hold by means of big pails and ropes. All realized that their very lives depended upon keeping the water below the safety-line, and all worked like Trojans in consequence.

"Let me work too," said Gilbert, and the others were glad enough to let him take hold and do his

share. The work warmed him up, and presently the foot that was numb began to feel better.

The day proved a long and uncertain one for all on board of the *O-Taka*. Whether they would float or go down was a problem which any moment might answer to their undoing. In the afternoon the water in the hold began to gain rapidly.

"We are lost!" cried one of the sailors. "We shall go down in another hour!"

Two of the men on board, one a carpenter and the other a cabinet maker, went below and made an examination of the leaks for the third time. They reported two new leaks, but said both might be stopped up. Canvas was brought out for that purpose, and several planks torn from the cabin, and the pair set to work. In the end the worst leaks were mended and then the water came in no more rapidly than it had early in the morning.

Yet the prospect was a gloomy one, and as night came on the fears of those on board increased. The wind had driven the ship for miles out of her course, and even the captain could not tell how close they were to land.

"We may be thirty, and we may be sixty miles," said he, in reply to a question from Gilbert.

"Then there is no danger of our striking on the rocks?"

"I will not say that. There are a great number of rocks and sunken reefs in this vicinity."

Utterly worn out with watching, a few on board of the *O-Taka* fell asleep. Gilbert could scarcely keep his eyes open, yet he felt in no mental condition to retire. Some of the children cried bitterly, especially because of the scantiness of the rations provided. Everything to eat and to drink was dealt out sparingly, for nobody could tell how long the stores would have to last.

It was a night that appeared to have no end, and when at last day broke it found the watchers all but exhausted. Now some of the sailors slept, only awaking when their strength was needed at the pump or the water buckets.

All day long an anxious lookout was kept for a sail, but none came within hailing distance. Once a bark passed to the southward, and they saw the smoke of a steamer to the westward, but that was all.

With the mainmast gone the *O-Taka* merely crawled along at a speed of less than five knots an hour. To rig a jury mast was out of the question, since most of the canvas belonging to the ship had either been lost overboard or used to stop up the worst of the leaks.

"We'll not sink, unless another storm strikes us,"

said the captain. "The worst enemy we have to fear at present is hunger."

"How much longer will the stores last?" asked Gilbert.

"I shall make them last three days, although we could use everything up to-day."

"And after that?"

"I'll try to make land somehow."

"On the coast of Korea?"

"To be sure—that is the only land that is near."

Again night came on, and two sailors, who had been permitted to sleep the greater part of the day, were placed on the lookout. Gilbert tried to rest, and almost before he knew it he was in a heavy slumber.

His awakening was a rude one. There came a sudden shock that bowled him over and over and almost sent him into the sea. Then, as he grasped a stanchion for support, the *O-Taka* struck again and almost went over. Yells of alarm arose on the air, and men, women, and children came pouring from the cabin.

"What have we struck?"

"The gods defend us! Is it another warship?"

"Are we all to be drowned at last?"

So the cries ran on. In the meantime the vessel righted herself once more, and then it could be seen

that she had slipped over a reef. Another reef was ahead, and again she pounded and scraped, and more cries arose, until it was as if Bedlam had been let loose. In terror a few leaped overboard, and, sad to relate, these people were never seen again.

But the immediate danger was now over, and directly ahead was a long, low stretch of marsh land, with several little bays and inlets. Straight for one of the inlets went the ship, and soon reached a spot only a few feet from solid ground. Then an anchor was thrown out, what little sail was up was lowered; and the perilous voyage came to an end.

At first those who were on the ship could not realize the truth of what had occurred—that the vessel had come to a tolerably safe landing, and that the dangers of shipwreck or starvation were past. They stared at one another and at the captain.

“We have struck somewhere on the southwest coast of Korea,” said Captain Toyano. “The vessel will be as safe here as if she was tied up in Nagasaki harbor, so far as our passengers are concerned. But I am afraid that the gallant *O-Taka* has seen the last of her sea trips,” and he turned away sadly, for the vessel was his sole property and all he had to depend upon for a living. Let it be added here that, later on, the ship was drawn from the inlet and

overhauled, and proved almost as seaworthy as ever, much to the old salt's satisfaction.

There was nothing to do but to wait until daylight, and, once the vessel was properly secured, by the anchor and by ropes tied to stakes driven into the marsh land, all on board but a few sailors went to sleep. Gilbert was glad to rest once again, and now made up for the greater part of the sleep lost during the voyage.

In the morning half a dozen Korean fishermen appeared, well bundled up, and with their queer-looking hats pulled well down over their ears. They were much surprised to find a ship at hand, but promised to do what they could for those on board. None of them had heard of the war between Russia and Japan, but when they did they at once took sides with their Japanese neighbors. They promised to bring dried fish, and some rice, as well as fresh water, and out of his own pocket Gilbert paid for some flour, some dried fruits, and some beans.

"I don't mind your rice and dried fish," he said to Jiru Siko, "but I can't live on it right along."

"Rice and fish very good," replied the little brown man, who, now that the danger was over, was quite himself once more. "Make much muscle, good wind—can live on rice and fish."

From one of the fishermen Gilbert learned that

the ship had been stranded at a point about sixty miles south of Chemulpo, and that there was a fairly good road leading to the latter named seaport. There was also another road leading over the mountains to Fu-san, on the southeast coast of the Land of the Morning Calm, as Korea is locally called.

"Japanese steamers stop at both Chemulpo and at Fu-san," said Captain Toyano, "or at least, they did so before this war broke out. If you wish to leave us I should advise you to go to Chemulpo, which is close to Seoul, the capital. All trade centers at Seoul, and if you get into any further trouble it will be best for you to be within call of that city."

Matters were talked over for several hours, and in the end Gilbert arranged to be taken in a pony cart to Chemulpo. Jiru Siko remained behind with his family, and it was a long time before the young American saw his faithful Japanese friend again.

"I shan't forget you, Siko," said Gilbert, on parting. "You did a great deal for me."

"Master Pennington do much for me," was the reply. "Send Russian rent man 'bout business—make rent man give up money—nice thing to do—not forget dat! We come together some day—when Jiru Siko soldier, maybe;" and so they parted.

Gilbert had with him for company a sailor named Nouye, sent to Chemulpo by Captain Toyano.

There was also the driver of the cart, an elderly Korean, who insisted upon having his pay for the trip before they started. As the amount was less than two dollars and fifty cents in our money Gilbert furnished the cash without hesitation. It was likewise agreed that the young American should pay about forty cents for a night's lodging for himself and his companion, and twenty cents for food for the driver and his ponies.

Under other circumstances Gilbert would have noted many things on that trip through a new country. But the weather remained cold, with another light fall of snow, and he was glad to bundle himself up and huddle down in the cart to keep warm. Yet he noticed that in general the air was much drier than in Manchuria and consequently more healthful. As a whole, the climate of the Land of the Morning Calm is delightful, the spring and autumn being unexcelled anywhere for clearness and balminess, and the summer being far from sultry. To be sure, there is some bad weather, and a few days when the thermometer climbs into the nineties in the shade, but these are the exceptions.

The night's stop was at a long row of *nipa* huts, some used as dwellings and others as stables. Much to his surprise, Gilbert was offered a fairly good bed and also a supper and a breakfast with which he

could find no fault. He also met a Korean who could speak fairly good English.

"I learned your tongue from a missionary," said the Korean. "I worked for him at his church. He was a nice man."

"And where is the missionary now?" questioned Gilbert.

"He has gone away. The Russians came here and they made it unpleasant for him."

"Why?"

"I know not, excepting it might be that they wanted to establish their own church."

"And have they done that?"

"Not yet. But they are coming sooner or later. They are now in the north of my land. They are pressing us hard."

"But the Japanese may drive them out."

"I trust they do. We do not want any Russians in the Land of the Morning Calm." And there the talk came to an end.

CHAPTER XIII

OLD COMRADES IN ARMS

THE town and harbor of Chemulpo are in reality the seaport for Seoul, the capital of Korea, which is inland about fifty miles. The harbor proper is a small affair and large vessels usually lie in the roadstead outside. Along the shore are clustered a number of wooden houses, painted white, and back of these are a small hill and a larger settlement, divided into Chinese, Japanese, and English, French, and German quarters. In the latter are hotels of fairly good size, a bank, schools, and churches. The trade is largely in the hands of the Japanese and Chinese, and almost all of the shipping is Japanese.

The sights in the town interested Gilbert very much, especially such as were to be seen in the Korean quarter proper. Here were long strings of stalls, piled high with various things on sale, and the streets were alive with people, for the Koreans believe in keeping "on the go" constantly.

The sailor, Nouye, knew of a good Japanese hotel, and conducted the young American hither, where he

was given a fair-sized room, heated, for his benefit, with a small foot stove. Gilbert was also introduced to several people at the hotel, so that he might not feel altogether strange. Then the sailor left him and he was allowed to shift for himself.

The ex-lieutenant needed a rest after his adventures on the Yellow Sea, and he determined to take it easy for several days before deciding upon what to do next. He learned that there was no steamer in the harbor bound for Nagasaki or any other port in Japan, and there was no telling when there would be.

"I rather reckon the *Columbia* and those on board will have to take care of themselves," he reasoned. "I wish I was with them, but I've got to take what comes."

The young American remained at the Japanese hotel just for one day, and then moved to another resort, kept by an Englishman named David Penworth. Here accommodations were also good, and the ex-lieutenant had the satisfaction of hearing his native tongue spoken once more.

"Quite a few Americans have enlisted for this war," said David Penworth. "I had some of them in here a couple of days ago."

"On the Japanese side?" questioned Gilbert.

"To be sure. I don't believe any of them have

joined the Russians. They seem to take to the Japs—they are such sturdy chaps, don't you know."

"They are that. Are those Americans who enlisted around now?"

"Oh, no, they came in from the Japanese camp, some miles from here. But, for all I know, they may be down again."

Gilbert soon learned that the Japanese were landing troops not only at Chemulpo but also at Chinnampo, a small treaty port about a hundred and fifty miles further north, and at Haiju, another place located midway between those first named.

The weather that these troops had to face was, for a while, terrible. The snow was heavy, the wind high, and camp accommodations very insufficient. Each soldier had to carry nearly a hundred pounds of baggage, and with this they struggled along, making marches of twenty to twenty-five miles a day.

The objective point of the Japanese army at that time was Ping-Yang, a place of considerable importance on the Tai-tong River. As soon as a sufficient army force was on hand, the Japanese proceeded to fortify Ping-Yang, and then more troops were sent in until, by the middle of March, there were over 80,000 soldiers in that vicinity, all forming the First Army Corps, under General Kuroki,

a commander well known for his skill and daring in the art of warfare.

Gilbert had hoped to meet some of his own countrymen at Chemulpo, but he was not prepared for the surprise in store for him. One day he was near the docks, watching the arrival of a regiment of Japanese soldiers, when he noticed a body of sharpshooters having at their head a first sergeant whose face looked strangely familiar.

"Dan Casey, or am I dreaming!" he cried, and ran forward to get a better look at the individual.

"Well, be the powers, if it ain't Leftenant Pennington!" came in a rich Irish brogue. "An' to think we'd be after matin' in such an outlandish place as this." And leaving his command Dan Casey, who, as my old readers know, had served on many a battlefield with Gilbert, rushed to the ex-lieutenant's side, and grasped his hand warmly.

"Then it is really you, Casey? I was afraid I was mistaken."

"Sure an' it's meself, leftenant. I'm a bould sodger b'y onct more, glory be to the Mikado's flag, which, by that same token, but privately, ain't half as handsome as Old Glory, is it now?"

"Where did you enlist? I've been wondering what became of you after we parted in the regular army."

"Sure an' I've been dhriftin' around, along with Carl Stummer. First we wint to the Philippines, thin Korea, an' thin to Japan, workin' whin we had to an' seein' the soights whin our pockets were lined, which same was not often. Both of us were down to hard-pan whin this war broke out, an' says I to Carl, says I, 'Lit's go to th' front.' 'Done wid ye,' says he, an' the next day we puts our names to a paper two yards long an' covered wid plasters."

"But you are a first sergeant?"

"Sure!" Dan Casey put up his finger knowingly. "They thought I was a captain in Uncle Sam's army an' I lit them remain under that impression. Carl's me second sergeant, so he is."

At this point another individual, short and rather stocky, came up, also dressed in the uniform of a Japanese soldier. For a moment he stared in amazement at Gilbert, then rushed in and embraced the ex-lieutenant.

"Vell, py chimanatics!" he burst out. "Of dis ton't peat der pand annahow! Lieutenant Bennington, or I vas plind! How in der vorld did you got here, told me dot. Vas you in der army too?"

"How are you, Stummer?" and Gilbert shook hands warmly with the former soldier of the U. S. regulars. "I declare, it seems like old times to see you and Casey together, and in army uniform. No,

I am not in the army, but I may be, if I see many more of our old crowd joining. So you are a sergeant, and Casey too. Let me congratulate you."

"Dank you, lieutenant. Yah, I vas an officer now. Casey, he gits me dot chob. Dan vos a great feller annahow. He makes dem dink he vos a major, or somedings like dot."

"Oh, I was after lettin' 'em do their own guess-
ing," put in Dan Casey. "But we really got in on our merits," he added. "'Tis a company of sharpshooters we have, an' Carl an' I had to qualify for our positions."

"And what score did you make?" questioned Gilbert, with a soldier's keen interest in such matters.

"Oh, I was lucky. I got ninety-six points out of a possible hundred, an' Carl got ninety-six points. The Japs thought both were great scores."

"And they were," answered Gilbert, for he himself was a good marksman, but had never done quite as well. "Where are you bound for?" he added, after a pause.

"We have orders to march to Ping-yang. After that I'm afther thinkin' we'll get orders to drive the Russians northward beyand the Yalu River—if we can do it."

"Put ve ton't vos do dot right away," came from

Carl Stummer. "Ve got to vait for besser veather. Dis vos den-dimes vorse nor dot rainy season in Luzon, ven we sleep in vater a foot teep. Maype you remember dot, hey?"

"Yes, I remember," said Gilbert, with a short laugh. "But we had some pretty interesting times, for all that, didn't we?"

"Oxactly so."

"I'm wishin' fer thim same times this minit," put in Dan Casey. "Sure an' ye must enlist, leftenant. Say the wurrd, an' I'll do all in me power to git ye a commission."

"No, I can't do that—at least, not now;" and then Gilbert told the pair about his business affairs, and how anxious he was regarding the *Columbia* and those on board.

"So Ben Russell and his brother Larry are on board," cried Dan Casey. "That's as interestin' as it is to mate you, so it is! Sure an' I'd like to see 'em."

"Maype da vos into dis fight, too," said Carl Stummer. "Pen Russell vos a porn fighter, remember dot."

"An' Larry could go into the navy," said Casey. "A fellow that fought wid Dewey could enlist on any Japanese warship."

Unfortunately the sharpshooters had to move on,

so Gilbert could not question the pair of old comrades in arms further. But he made an appointment for that evening, and the three spent several hours together, talking over old times and speculating over the future. Both Casey and Stummer urged Gilbert to enlist, and at last the ex-lieutenant promised to think the matter over.

"An' if ye do, be sure to git wid us," said Dan Casey.

"Yah, do dot py all means," added Carl Stummer, and Gilbert promised to keep the whole matter in mind.

After Casey and Stummer had departed the young American thought over the matter for a good hour. He had spent many years of life in army service, but in the past this had been only under Old Glory. It would be a new experience to march under the Mikado's flag. Yet a great many Amerians were doing it.

"If I join the Japanese army, I'd be a regular soldier of fortune and no mistake," he mused. "Well, I might do worse. After all, army service is largely a matter of business—when it isn't the army of one's own country. I don't know but that I could fight just as hard for the Mikado as I have for Uncle Sam." And there, for the time being, he dropped the matter. He would not have considered

taking up arms against the Russians had he not been so badly treated at Port Arthur.

The very next day after the meeting just recorded a vessel arrived at Chemulpo carrying large quantities of army stores for the Japanese soldiers. The vessel was from Nagasaki, and Gilbert lost no time in visiting the ship and asking for the latest shipping news from that port.

"You may look over the papers," said the purser, and handed him copies of the *Mainichi*, which means *Daily*, and of several sheets devoted largely to Japanese shipping interests.

"I'm sorry, but I haven't got to reading Japanese yet," said Gilbert, and was then handed a copy of the *Japan Mail*, and also a copy of the *Japan Times*, both published in English.

Sitting down, the young American looked the two sheets over with interest. At first he could find nothing of what he wanted, but at last caught a paragraph which instantly commanded his attention. The paragraph stated that the *Columbia*, Captain Ponsberry, had arrived at Nagasaki, with a mixed cargo consigned to various ports. She had expected to sail for ports in Korea and Manchuria, but owing to the war, the captain was awaiting further orders from the owners.

"I hope she stays at Nagasaki until I can get

there," said Gilbert to himself. "If she'll do that, perhaps we can make something out of what's on board. The Japanese are paying big prices for stores of all kinds just now. I wish I could sail for Nagasaki at once."

The opportunity to sail for the Japanese seaport named came sooner than expected. That very afternoon a steamer came in from an upper port. She was bound for Nagasaki direct, and Gilbert had but little difficulty in procuring passage, although he had to pay just twice the regular fare. But in war times this was to be expected.

"And if a Russian warship sinks us, you must not complain," said the captain of the steamer, after the bargain had been made.

"All right. I'll take my medicine the same as the rest," returned the young American.

CHAPTER XIV

ON BOARD THE "COLUMBIA"

THE steamer bound for Nagasaki left Chemulpo harbor early on the following morning, with sixteen passengers and eight army officers on board. The army officers were a fine set of men, and Gilbert soon got well acquainted with all of them.

"Japan is simply fighting for her rights," said one of the officers, during the trip. "We want no Russian interference with our trade."

"I cannot blame you," was the ex-lieutenant's answer. "I know Uncle Sam would not allow any tampering with our commerce."

During the talk it developed that three of the army officers had served in China during the Boxer uprising, and they were surprised to learn that Gilbert had been a lieutenant in the United States army at that time, and was thinking somewhat of joining the Japanese forces.

"We shall certainly be glad to have you with us," said one of the Japanese. "We are raising such a vast army that we are rather handicapped for capable officers."

"Then you think I could get a commission?"

"Undoubtedly."

"As what?"

"Perhaps as captain, and even higher."

"That is certainly worth remembering. I should not wish to enlist as a mere private."

"If you desire, when we arrive at Nagasaki, I will introduce you to some military authorities who have great influence."

"Very well. Captain Okopa: if I decide to join, I'll be glad to have you do that."

"We expect some hard fighting."

"Well, I won't mind that, once I am in the field; indeed, I'd rather fight than hang around a camp any time."

"So would I, lieutenant. It takes all the energy out of a man to lie around camp for a week or a month."

"I suppose the Russians will send a big army into Korea and Manchuria, too."

"They will probably send as many soldiers as they can get to the front. But you must remember, they are a long distance from home, so to speak. They can send troops only on the single railroad, or on foot."

"They are rushing troops into Port Arthur at a lively enough rate."

"That is the end of their railroad line, and they probably feel that they must hold the railroad at any cost. Besides, they want to hold Port Arthur itself if they can, in spite of our navy and our army."

"Will your navy attack Port Arthur?"

"More than likely they will. They have already sunk some Russian warships stationed there. I fancy our ships may try to bottle up the Russian fleet, just as your Hobson tried to bottle up Admiral Cervera at Santiago."

The Japanese officer was correct in his surmise, and the attempt to blockade Port Arthur was made by Admiral Togo late in February.

For this purpose five old steamers were obtained, and they were heavily loaded with stones and explosives. Volunteers to man the doomed vessels were called for, and the result was the same as when volunteers were called for at Santiago—nearly the whole of the navy wanted to go! Men known for their coolness and bravery were selected, and in the darkness of the night of the 24th, the heavily-laden vessels were headed for the harbor entrance.

The Russians, however, were on the alert, and soon, despite the bad weather, the enemy were discovered, and the land batteries opened a heavy fire on the doomed ships. As a consequence one was grounded three miles from the harbor, where she

blew up, and another sank but a short distance away. A third had her steering gear shot away and then blew up.

Only two ships now remained and these, despite the awful rain of shot and shell, reached the harbor entrance and were anchored. Then those on board got out their small boats, set fire to the fuses placed in readiness, and rowed away for their lives. Shortly afterwards the two loaded ships blew up. A lively fire was directed at the small boats, but, strange as it may seem, not one of them was hit. But in the darkness and because of the heavy wind that was blowing, the small boats got far out of their proper course, and it was not until three o'clock the next day that they were picked up by the big ships standing off outside of the harbor.

The two ships sunk at the harbor entrance did not block the channel completely. But, combined with the wrecks of the sunken Russian warships, they made the passageway very difficult. After this exploit was over Admiral Togo began a strict blockade of the port, with frequent and highly destructive bombardments.

Night and day a strict watch was kept for the possible appearance of a Russian warship. Once there was an alarm which quickly brought Gilbert to the deck. A big warship was seen approaching.

Her flag was flying, but what it was nobody, at first, could make out.

"If she's a Russian, we are as good as done for," was one of the passengers' comment. "She'll sink us just as sure as fate."

"I don't think she'll do it until after she has taken us passengers off," replied Gilbert. "It wouldn't be right."

Slowly the warship came closer, and the captain of the steamer watched her eagerly through his glasses.

"She doesn't look like a Russian," he said slowly. "But she may be, nevertheless."

At last all doubts were dispelled, for the flag swung around broadside to the steamer. It was the Union Jack of England.

"Hurrah!" shouted Gilbert. "That lets us down easily."

"Yes, and I must say I am not sorry," returned Captain Okopa. "I wish another chance to fight on land."

Soon the English warship was within hailing distance. She wished to know if the Japanese steamer had seen anything of a British merchantman named the *Defender*.

"Haven't seen or heard of her," was the reply. "For what port was she bound?" But the Englishman would not answer this question, and

soon the warship swung around and was lost to sight, steaming westward.

"There is going to be great trouble for some merchantmen," said Captain Okopa to Gilbert. "If they carry contraband of war, they are liable to be sunk."

"By either nation, I suppose."

"I am sure the Russians will sink any ship carrying goods for our nation,—I mean war stores and other contraband goods. What Japan will do, I do not know."

"I reckon they'll do some sinking just as quick," said the young American. "Your work at Port Arthur shows that you are mightily in earnest in this affair."

The run to Nagasaki was made in safety, and three days after leaving Chemulpo the steamer came to anchor at her dock in the Japanese port. As Gilbert had visited Nagasaki a number of times, the scenes around him—the strange-looking craft, the flags of various nations, and the small boats filled with stores and floating about, trading—were no novelty to him. He longed to get ashore and hunt up the old *Columbia* and those on board.

But there were certain formalities to be gone through before he could leave the steamer. His hand-bag was thoroughly searched, and he was asked



"HULLO, BEN! HULLO, LARRY!" EXCLAIMED GILBERT.

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numerous questions. At last all appeared to be satisfactory to the Japanese officials, and he was told he could land and do as he pleased.

It took the young American but a few minutes to ascertain where the *Columbia* lay, and he lost not a moment in picking his way along the docks in that direction. On all sides were great heaps of army stores, awaiting transportation to Korea and Manchuria. There could be no doubt but that this war was to be carried through on a large scale.

At last he found the ship with which he was so familiar. There on the deck stood that veteran of the sea, Captain Nat Ponsberry, of Gloucester, as hale and hearty as ever. Close at hand was his first mate, Tom Grandon, and not far away were Ben Russell and his younger brother Larry.

"Hullo, Ben! Hullo, Larry!" exclaimed Gilbert. "Glad to see you!"

"Gilbert Pennington!" ejaculated the Russell brothers, in a breath. And then they leaped forward to embrace the newcomer.

"Where in the world did you drop from?" asked Ben.

"We were talking about you not five minutes ago," put in Larry. "We were wondering how soon we'd hear from you."

"I came from Chemulpo," answered Gilbert, shaking first one hand and then another. He turned to the master of the *Columbia*. "How are you, Captain Ponsberry? How are you, Grandon?"

"I'm fust-rate, Mr. Pennington," came from the captain. "How are you? But I needn't ask, fer ye look as fit as a fiddle. I reckon as how them Roossians haven't worried ye, none, after all, have they?"

"Haven't they, though? Just you wait until I spin my yarn, as you sailors call it. I'm mighty glad you stayed at Nagasaki."

"So I said as how you would be," said Tom Grandon, who was a bosom friend of the captain and privileged to speak at all times. "I said we'd better await orders."

"Have you seen any of the fighting?" questioned Larry, his eyes bright with anticipation.

"Yes, I saw the sinking of the Russian warships at Port Arthur. I thought of you and the fight in Manila Bay at the time, Larry."

"Wish I had been there," declared the young sailor. He thought of his own days behind one of the big guns, while serving under Admiral Dewey, as already recorded by me in "Under Dewey at Manila."

"But I thought you said you had come from Chemulpo," put in Ben.

"So I did, Ben. But I'll have to tell my story in detail before you'll understand it. First of all, though, let me ask Captain Ponsberry if his cargo is safe."

"As safe as when we left home," declared the master of the *Columbia*.

"Good! Have you received any orders from home since you arrived here?"

"Yes."

"What orders?"

"That I wasn't to attempt to deliver anything until I heard from you."

"I'm glad of that." Gilbert drew a deep breath. "That takes a weight off my shoulders. Now the next thing to do, captain, is to throw the most of those old orders for goods overboard."

"I said you'd sell to the Japanese," declared Ben. "They are paying the best of prices for everything."

"Exactly; and we'll run no risk of having the cargo confiscated if we sell in Nagasaki," added Gilbert.

"I shouldn't mind running a risk on the high seas," came from Larry, with a smile. "I'd like a little excitement."

"And a brush with the enemy, eh, Larry? I see

you are the same as of old," and Gilbert laughed. "I've got to congratulate you on becoming second mate," he continued.

"Tell us your story, Gilbert," said Ben. "I'm dying to hear what has happened," and then the party adjourned to the cabin of the schooner, where each told his tale in detail.

CHAPTER XV

JOINING THE JAPANESE ARMY

ALL on board of the *Columbia* had had an uneventful voyage to the Sea of Japan and everybody was in the best of health. Since arriving at Nagasaki those on the vessel had heard much about the war just opened and had seen not a few Japanese soldiers depart for the front. Larry and Ben had likewise visited one of the warships, just before it departed to join Admiral Togo's fleet, and both were enthusiastic over what they had seen.

"The order was as good as on any American warship," declared Larry, "and the gunners looked as if they could fire just as well, too."

"Did you see any Americans?" questioned Gilbert.

"At least half a dozen—two that were with Dewey at Manila, and one that was on board the *Brooklyn* with my brother Walter, at the time our navy was fighting in Cuban waters. They told me that the Japanese navy had a great many Americans on its ships."

"I'll wager you were strongly tempted to enlist, Larry."

"Well, who wouldn't be? When a fellow has once smelt powder the feeling to keep on fighting gets in one's bones."

"That's just the way I felt, when I saw those Japanese soldiers embarking for the front," declared Ben. "It put me in mind of the time our regiment started for Cuba, and when we started for the Philippines."

"I believe upon my word, Ben Russell, you want to go to the front this minute!"

"What about yourself, Gilbert? Now come, tell the plain truth."

"Do you want the plain truth, and nothing but the truth, as they say in court?"

"Yes."

"Then I'd join the Japanese army to-morrow if it wasn't for my duty here, and if I was sure I could get a commission. I don't at all like the way I was treated at Port Arthur by the Russians, and I'd just like the chance to square accounts with them."

"Hurrah! let's all go to war!" burst out Larry. "You two can be officers, while I'll be a high private in the rear rank." And he began to march around in true military style, with an imaginary gun on his shoulder. "By column of

fours, march! Left wheel! Halt! Captain Pennington will deploy to the left. Captain Russell will send out an advance guard under High Private Russell to see if the Russian warships are hiding anywhere behind yonder huckleberry bushes."

"Larry, quit your fooling," interrupted Ben, and then burst out laughing. "Gilbert, he's as bad as ever. I can't do a thing with him."

"Never mind, he's got the war fever just as bad as any of us. Isn't that true, Larry?"

"Just you try me and see. If both of you go to the front, you've got to take me along,—that is, if Captain Ponsberry will let me go."

"What! what! are ye going to desert the ship?" broke in the master of the *Columbia*. "I can't allow this nohow!"

"Oh, captain, you don't mean that?" pleaded Larry quickly.

"But what is the *Columbia* to do without her second mate?" asked Captain Ponsberry quizzically.

"I'll find you another hand—just as good as myself."

"Well, we are not going to war just yet," put in Ben. "We want to know a little more about what is taking place first."

"Right you are," came from Gilbert. "And I

must make some arrangements about the *Columbia's* cargo."

The ex-lieutenant learned from Captain Ponsberry that several agents of the Japanese Government had been inquiring after the *Columbia's* cargo and had left their names and addresses. Gilbert decided to look these people up on the following day, and did so, in company with the master of the ship.

It happened that the vessel carried a number of things much needed by Japan just at that moment, and feeling free to sell the cargo as he pleased, Gilbert was not long in striking a bargain which was very advantageous to the Richmond Importing Company and incidentally to himself. More than this, he took orders for more goods of a similar sort, the same to be delivered at Nagasaki as soon as possible. These goods the Richmond Importing Company had stored at its new warehouse at Manila, and Captain Ponsberry was directed to make the run to Luzon and back without delay.

"The company will clear six thousand dollars on that order," said Gilbert to the captain, "and if you hurry it through O. K. you can depend upon it that you will not be forgotten."

"I'll do my best," answered Captain Ponsberry.

"Of course you understand the risk to be run.

If a Russian warship catches you, she'll sink you sure."

"I'll keep my weather eye open for 'em, Mr. Pennington."

The prospect of a quick run to Manila and back, with a possible brush with a Russian cruiser, interested Larry, and at the last moment he was undecided whether to remain on the *Columbia* or go ashore with his brother Ben.

"Are you going to the front or not?" he asked, of Ben and Gilbert.

"It's a toss-up, Larry," answered his older brother. "I've a very strong notion to see what I can do about a commission."

"Then why not go and see before the schooner sails? Then I'll know what you are going to do."

"All right, I'll go," said Ben.

This was what Gilbert had in mind to do, and that afternoon the pair hunted up Captain Okopa.

"I am glad to hear that you are willing to join us," cried the Japanese officer, after Ben had been introduced. "So you have been a captain?" he went on, to Ben. "I do not know what I can do for you, but I will do my best."

He went with them to a recruiting office and there introduced them to several army officers who chanced to be present. Both were plied with ques-

tions, and many of their answers were taken down by a stenographer.

"You can probably get commissions as lieutenants and perhaps captains," said one of the officers. "But your records will be investigated; if not at once, then later."

"You are at liberty to do as you please about that," answered Gilbert, and Ben said the same.

It may astonish some of my readers to think a commission in the Japanese army was so easy to obtain. The truth was, the army of Japan was being suddenly increased from about a hundred thousand men to over three hundred thousand men. Recruits were easy to obtain, for the Japanese is patriotic to the core and ready at any time to lay his life down for his Mikado and his country, but many of the men were untrained in the art of the soldier, and officers were next to impossible to obtain. So far not only Americans, but also Englishmen and Germans had gone to the front as officers of various grades, while not a few foreigners were also in the ranks.

The next few days were anxious ones for the two young Americans. In the meantime Larry decided to remain with Captain Ponsberry, who told the young sailor he was glad of it. Ben and Gilbert saw the *Columbia* sail, and each waved Larry, the

captain, and the others on board an affectionate adieu.

"He's as fine a man as I ever sailed with," declared Ben. "I trust they make the trip in safety."

"So do I," returned Gilbert. "For their own sakes as well as for the sake of our company."

The young Americans had signified that they would prefer to keep together, and at the end of the week Captain Okopa came to them and told them the matter had been arranged.

"I am going to take out a special command of four companies," said he. "This is to do special duty in the field, more of which you will learn later. I have been appointed major of the command, and if you wish to go with me I can make both of you captains."

"What is the nature of your special work?" asked Gilbert.

"We shall be used in discovering the enemy's position and in holding difficult points," said the Japanese, and then he explained as best he could.

The matter was talked over by Gilbert and Ben for a good hour and then they decided to accept Major Okopa's offer. Before night they were sworn into the service in true Japanese fashion, and measured for their uniforms.

"Well, we are real Japanese soldiers at last!"

cried Ben. "I declare, I feel like a cat in a strange garret."

"I'm going to study up the Japanese tactics," declared Gilbert, and he went at it with a vigor. Both Gilbert and Ben knew a great deal on the subject already, otherwise they would not have gotten the commissions dealt out to them.

By the middle of the following week they were introduced to the soldiers who were to serve under them. Much to their surprise the command was made up largely of students from the Japanese schools and universities—bright men who were eager to do all they could for their beloved Japan. Not a few could speak English, so Gilbert and Ben felt at home with them almost from the start.

"This is much better than if we had a lot of the peasantry to deal with," said Gilbert. "Drilling these chaps will be more fun than work;" and so it proved.

The command was quartered some distance outside of Nagasaki and was drilled twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Major Okopa had much outside work to attend to, and as a consequence much of the task of drilling the soldiers fell upon Gilbert and Ben.

"Let us show them what American officers can do," said Gilbert, and they worked harder than ever

before, until the drill of the battalion was practically perfect. During that time he and Ben picked up a great many Japanese army terms, so that they addressed their men with but little difficulty.

In the meantime the Japanese Government was losing no time in sending troops to Korea, and every ship possible to use for a transport was pressed into the service. The destination of many of the transports was unknown to all but those high in authority, even the most alert of the war correspondents being unable to obtain information.

"Beats all, how the news is kept back," said one young man, who represented some Pacific Coast papers. "But I am no worse off than a score of other special correspondents."

"Are you going to the front?" asked Gilbert, who had become interested in the young newspaper man.

"Will if I get the chance."

"Perhaps you'll be able to go with us."

"I'd like that. I can't get along with these Japs alone. They talk too fast for me."

"Have you sent your papers any news at all?"

"Not much. How can I, if it's not to be got? I've told them about the army here, and the rumors that are circulating, but if I don't send more pretty soon I'm afraid I'll get my walking papers," concluded the correspondent gloomily.

By the first of March over forty transports had left Nagasaki, all loaded with troops for the front. Many other transports left Cjina, where great numbers of guns were shipped and also horses. Major Okopa kept his command in readiness to leave on a day's notice, and at last came word that they would depart on the first day of the following week.

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE WAY TO PING-YANG

“WE are off at last!”

It was Gilbert who spoke. Dressed in the uniform of a Japanese captain of infantry, he stood upon the deck of the transport *Yojirama* and saw the shipping of Nagasaki harbor fading rapidly in the distance.

The transports to carry soldiers and stores were twelve in number, and had as a guard three large warships and two torpedo destroyers. Each transport was crowded to the utmost, every foot of deck space being occupied.

“This is pretty much like a cattle ship,” remarked Ben, who stood near. “I don’t know what we are going to do if a storm comes up.”

“We’ll do as we’ve done before, Ben,—when serving under the flag,—make the best of it.”

“I shouldn’t mind a storm, unless it was a right out-and-out hurricane,” put in an old sailor who had joined the army.

“One might expect that, from such a sea-dog as

you," laughed Gilbert. "I know you don't like anything better than to have it blow great guns."

"Where are we bound, captain?"

"You'll have to ask me something easier, Blarco. To Korea or Manchuria, I reckon."

"All right—so long as it's not the North Pole, I'm satisfied."

"I imagine we're going to follow the rest of the corps that went to Chemulpo and Chinampo," came from Ben. "More than likely our troops will strike at the Russians from across the Yalu River."

"Sounds rather odd to say *our* troops, doesn't it?"

"It does,—but what else can you say?"

"Nothing. We are under the Mikado's flag now and no mistake," answered Gilbert.

The special command to which the ex-American lieutenant and his chum belonged occupied the center portion of the upper deck of the transport. The weather was no longer bitterly cold, but it was far from warm, and many of the soldiers were content to huddle down in sheltered corners, wrapped up in their army blankets.

All day long the Japanese warships hovered around the transports, looking for the possible appearance of a Russian war vessel. It was known that the enemy had a small fleet stationed at Vladi-

vostok, in Siberia, just north of Korea, and it was thought that this fleet might swoop down upon the transports and cause serious trouble. But, luckily for the *Yojirama* and the other ships, no enemy put in an appearance.

The truth was, the Vladivostok fleet was still hard and fast in the ice which blocked that harbor, and it was not until March 19 that it was able to blast its way out with dynamite and get into proper trim for fighting. Then it sailed away, the Japanese spies knew not whither, but presumably to join the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. Before this took place the Japanese endeavored to bombard Vladivostok, but without material success.

The course of the *Yojirama* was past the southern extremity of Korea, and then up the western coast. There was now no doubt in the minds of the young Americans but that they were to land as already surmised, and Gilbert brought out a small map of Korea and Manchuria which he carried, and began to study it diligently.

"I want to get the lay of the land in my head," he said to his chum. "Then, when we make a move, I'll know what we are doing."

"I want to study that map too," came from Ben, and he did so. From it they learned that Korea was about a hundred and fifty miles from east to

west, and about six hundred miles from north to south. It was a peninsula, divided in part from the mainland by the Yalu River, which marked the boundary between Korea and Manchuria.

The native name of Korea is Cho-sen or Kao-li, and for years it was known as the Hermit Kingdom, because of its efforts to keep out all foreigners. It was formerly a portion of China, but became independent in 1895. The population is about eleven millions, of which about two hundred thousand live at Seoul, the capital, on the river Han. Up to the present war the monarchy had been an absolute one, with the exception that many "favours" were granted to the Russian Government, but now great changes were about to take place.

Almost before the Koreans knew that the first gun had been fired a body of Japanese soldiers under General Inouye, marched upon Seoul and by a showing of arms compelled the emperor to listen to their demands. At this time a powerful Russian diplomat, M. Pavloff, was at Seoul, and he was compelled to leave, being escorted to Chemulpo and placed on board of an outgoing ship under a Japanese guard. The Emperor of Korea was then compelled to recognize the power of Japan, and at once hastened to congratulate the Mikado on his naval successes, and said he trusted Japan would be equally successful on

land. Thereupon a treaty was made between the two countries by which Japan took sole charge of all war affairs for both nations, but guaranteeing to Korea independence in the future. Later still, through the work of a powerful Japanese diplomat, Marquis Ito, Japan was given permission to build railroads through Korea, and occupy whatever points were necessary for the victorious conduct of the war. This practically shut the Russians out and made them bitter in the extreme.

The course of the *Yojirama* was now past Chemulpo harbor, and then it became known that a landing would be made at Chinampo. This is the seaport of the important town of Ping-yang, sometimes known as Phyöng-yang, and located to the northeast, on the Tai-tong River.

The port of Chinampo is well protected from the fury of the Yellow Sea, when the winds are high, by a range of hills, and in this harbor all of the Japanese transports lost no time in landing their troops. All sorts of small craft were brought into use, from the transports' rowboats to Japanese steam launches, and Korean *sampans*, the latter looking very much like our own mud scows, but with a small covering of palm leaves or other material over the stern. The work of landing was carried on day and night, and it was at two o'clock in the morning when Gil-

bert and his chum, with their command, found themselves left on the shore of the little bay, about quarter of a mile from the town. A stiff breeze was blowing and it was anything but comfortable.

"I'm going to have a cup of coffee," said Ben, and forthwith set a Japanese cook to making the same. Gilbert joined him, and each drank two cups, which seemed to do them much good.

The distance from Chinampo to Ping-yang is about fifty miles, but the route by land or water is almost twice that distance. To the east and the west are great ridges of mountains, covered with a variety of trees and shrubs, nearly all, as yet, bare of leaves. The main highway into China from Seoul runs through Ping-yang and also touches Hwang-ju, which is midway between Ping-yang and the sea-coast.

The following noon found the command on the march to a point where they were to meet another portion of the army bound for Ping-yang. It was reported that the soldiers ahead had already had a skirmish with the Russian outposts, in which none had been killed but several wounded.

"We'll be on the firing line before a great while," said Gilbert. "The Russians are not going to give up their hold on Korea, if they can help it."

Once more, to the surprise of all, the weather

turned out bitterly cold and there was a slight fall of snow. Meeting more troops and also several hundred coolies,—Japanese peasants brought along to “tote” baggage and stores—the whole body went into camp for the best part of a week not far from Hwang-ju.

“This is tough and no mistake,” said the old sailor, Blarco, as he hugged a small camp-fire which had been built. “I believe my left foot is about half frozen.”

“It’s no wonder, since we’ve been marching through icy slush six inches deep,” replied a brother soldier. “After all, campaigning in Korea is going to be no picnic.”

“Did you expect a picnic, when you enlisted?” asked Gilbert, who was munching a slice of not over-fresh bread.

“Not at all,” was the prompt answer. “But I did think spring would be here by this time.”

“I don’t think winter will last much longer,” said Blarco. “The snow is very wet and it will soon disappear. But, oh, for a good hot wind from the south!” and he heaved a sigh.

The young Americans found the town of Hwang-ju an interesting place, located on a small stream flowing into the Tai-tong. It is surrounded by such a wall as surrounds the majority of towns in Korea

and China. There are quaint gates and towers. The Japanese were in command, and a small company of soldiers was located at the Water Gate, by the river, and another company at the town-hall.

A large portion of the town was in ruins, and it was learned from Major Okopa that this was due to the Chinese-Japanese War of 1894, when the Chinese were driven from the town by the sturdy sons of Nippon. At that time many places were burned or blown up, and to this day only a small portion of the ruins has been cleared away.

"I'm very much interested in the funny native shops," said Blarco, as he and Ben and Gilbert strolled around. "Just look at the things to sell! Did you ever see such a mixture?" And mixture it certainly was, from wooden combs to thin Korean silks, and from cords for belts to curiously printed cotton cloths, and white goods such as are rarely seen at home. There were also special stalls for the sale of paper, from the heavy and handsome quality used for floor coverings to the lighter grades used for walls and for writing and wrapping. Pottery ware was similar to that seen in Japan, and there was much in wood besides, and likewise curiously woven mats, and curtains, and rope harnesses for horses and ponies.

“What do these people live on mostly?” asked Ben.

“I asked that question of the major,” returned Gilbert. “He says the poorer people live on rice, peas, and beans, and radishes.”

“Radishes?”

“Exactly. They grow a big radish weighing two or three pounds, and pickle the thing for winter use, just as the German puts down sauer-kraut.”

Close at hand was the stall of a butcher, where were exposed for sale beef and mutton in small quantities, and also chickens, pheasants, hares, and a variety of small birds. Beside this stall was one for the sale of nuts of various kinds, and here the young Americans purchased some peanuts and some walnuts, which were as fine as they had ever eaten.

CHAPTER XVII

SURPRISED BY THE COSSACKS

"WELL, here we are at Ping-yang and no sight of the Russians yet."

"That is true, Ben; but from all accounts the enemy are not far distant," said Gilbert, who was polishing up his sword, which had become dimmed by dampness.

"I see you are getting ready for a fight."

"We didn't come such a long distance as this to play. If I'm going to fight, I'd like to get at it. I hate to grow rusty in a camp, doing nothing."

"I believe most of the fighting is being done by the warships," went on Ben, who was resting on a heap of straw.

"Well, that is bound to be the case until both the Russian army and our own are in first-class fighting trim. Neither side is going to risk a big battle until then."

What Ben said about the fights on the sea was true. The Japanese continued to hammer at Port Arthur and at the Russian ships stationed there,

and as a result of several engagements a Japanese torpedo destroyer was sunk, and a similar vessel of the Russians blown up by a mine. The losses on both sides were not heavy. But the constant firing made all the residents and troops at Port Arthur very anxious, and many foreigners lost no time in quitting the city. In the meantime the work on the Russian defenses went on as before, and a Russian army began to come down from northern Manchuria to give the city relief should the Japanese endeavor to capture it, a movement begun but a short while later.

Three days after the conversation recorded above Major Okopa came to the quarters of the command in suppressed excitement.

"There is work for us to do at last," said he, after calling Gilbert, Ben, and his other officers together. "We go on the march at sundown to-day."

"May I ask where to?" asked Gilbert.

"We are to move northward on the road to An-ju and Chong-ju," was the answer. "It is reported that the Russians are sending out troops around one of the mountain passes. We are to learn if this is correct, and if so we are to open fire, for the purpose of learning how strong the command really is."

"That suits me," cried Gilbert. And Ben echoed the sentiment.

Soon after that the soldiers were set to work packing their belongings. The stores of the commissary department were taken care of by twenty-odd coolies and a score of Korean donkeys and ponies. Many of the stores were in big, square boxes, and it was a queer sight to see a donkey or pony coming along with a big box strapped on each side, and perhaps another on top of him. Behind the animal would trot a coolie, carrying another box, or a big package, on his shoulders.

"Those coolies are no better than slaves," declared Gilbert.

"That is true," said Major Okopa. "But they are as faithful as anybody you can imagine."

It was known for a fact that the Russians had some troops at Chong-ju, so the advance through the mountains had to be made with caution. The Russian command was composed of six squadrons of Cossacks, under General Mischenko,—as daring a set of cavalrymen as ever existed.

"We've got to keep our weather eye open for those Cossacks," said Gilbert, while on the march that evening. "It would be a fine thing if they should surround us and cut off our retreat."

"It will be our own fault if we allow them to do it," returned Ben.

The battalion was now perfectly drilled, and each man could shoot fairly well. Because so many of the soldiers had been students the command had been nicknamed the University Corps, and this name clung to it throughout the entire campaign. Among the privates and under-officers not only Gilbert, but also Ben, had made many friends.

No rest was taken until almost daybreak, and then the battalion went into temporary camp between two hills, where a dense wood cut off the view from nearly every side. The spot was practically in the heart of a Korean forest, with a small stream flowing silently at the base of the hills. There had been a footbridge over the stream, but the recent freshet had carried the timbers away.

All were tired out after a tramp of many miles, and glad to rest on any sort of bed that came handy. The place was picketed with care, and then all became quiet.

Gilbert was resting on a bed of boughs he had had a coolie cut for him when, from a distance, he heard a shot, followed by several others in rapid succession. At once he leaped up, and at the same time an alarm sounded throughout the whole camp.

"Something is wrong, that is certain," came from

Ben, and a few minutes later the companies were formed. In the meantime a strong guard plunged into the forest, to learn what the shots meant.

There was an anxious wait, and then it was learned that a body of sixteen Cossacks on horseback had appeared on a ridge overlooking the forest. Unfortunately the Japanese picket in that vicinity had shown himself, and some of the Cossacks had fired on him and he had fired in return. Then of a sudden the Cossacks had disappeared.

It must be confessed that under these circumstances Major Okopa did not know whether to advance or retreat. He waited where he was until night and then made a movement as if to withdraw. This was only, however, a ruse, and at midnight the University Corps went forward at a faster pace than ever.

"We must take some risk, even if we draw on a regular engagement," said the major to Gilbert.

"Can't we send spies ahead, major? That might save the battalion from trouble."

"I've thought of doing that towards morning. But I don't want any detachment to get too far away from our main body."

"I see. Well, if you send out spies, I hope you'll let me go with them," continued the ex-lieutenant of the American regulars.

"Have you ever done such work before?"

"A little."

"Then perhaps I'll let you go, since you desire it."

Another halt was made at three o'clock in the morning. They were now at a point where the road forked, that to the left leading to the mountain pass, and that on the right to one of the mountain tops. The trail was a narrow one, hardly fit for anything but men on foot or horseback.

After a brief discussion it was decided to send out two detachments, one under Gilbert and another under Ben. Gilbert was to take the trail leading to the mountain top and at sunrise get the best view possible of the situation. Ben was to hunt for the Cossacks, but not to engage them unless it could not be helped.

The work just suited Gilbert, and it was not long before he was on the way, accompanied by eight men from his company whom he knew he could trust implicitly.

It was still dark, but the road was a fairly straight one up the hills and not difficult to follow. The detachment went in single file, and each man had his weapon ready for use.

"Do not shoot unless it is necessary," said Gilbert, and the men under him knew that the American officer meant just what he said. Gilbert never

issued an order twice, consequently his men did not look for it.

For fully an hour the detachment climbed one hill and then another. Occasionally they passed the huts of some Koreans, but if the inhabitants were anywhere about they did not show themselves. They knew it would be useless to apply to any of the natives for information, for whatever might be told to them could not be relied upon.

Presently they began the ascent of the mountain proper. Here the trail was more difficult and progress was, consequently, slow. There was a cliff to pass, narrow and dangerous, and then a series of rocks around which the trail ran in serpentine fashion.

So far there had been nothing in the way of an alarm, but now, from a great distance, came two shots, followed, after an interval of several minutes, by half a dozen others. Gilbert at once called a halt.

"Satmo, what do you think? where did those shots come from?" he asked of a sharpshooter trudging behind him.

"That way, captain," was the answer, in Japanese, and the soldier pointed with his hand.

"That is what I thought, too. Is it not the direction taken by Captain Russell and his detachment?"

"I should say it was, captain."

"Then he must have met some of the enemy," murmured Gilbert, and relapsed into silence.

It was not pleasant for him to think his bosom friend might be in trouble. But as he could just then offer no assistance, he ordered his detachment forward once more, and thus they moved on until the very summit of the mountain was gained. By that time all were tired out and glad to rest.

The night had been clear and the day to follow was equally so. Gilbert had brought with him a strong pair of field glasses, and with these he surveyed the scene spread before him with eagerness and keen interest.

Far to the westward rolled the glistening waters of the Yellow Sea, while equally distant eastward were the lofty peaks which form the backbone of Korea from north to south. Closer was the sparkling river, and at a distance one settlement and another, the walls and towers standing out clearly before the background of houses and huts. To the northwest was Chong-ju, where it was known the Cossacks were in force. In that direction Gilbert looked for a long while.

He had expected to see the encampment under Major Okopa, but the forest hid this from view, and not a single soldier of any nationality was in sight.

"Tell me if you see anything alarming," said he to Satmo. "I do not."

The Japanese sharpshooter took the glasses and looked around as his captain had ordered. He shook his head slowly.

"I see nothing of any soldiers——" he began, and then gave a start. "Yes! There are some troops, just coming from yonder forest!"

He handed the glasses back to Gilbert, and the young captain gazed in the direction pointed out. The sharpshooter was right, a body of Cossacks numbering at least three hundred had put in an appearance, all riding rapidly, and in the direction where the command under Major Okopa had been left!

"They mean to fight—if they have discovered our force!" thought Gilbert. "I must warn the major of this without delay!"

He took another look and now saw another body of Cossacks approaching but a quarter of a mile behind the second.

"Our force can never fight that body of cavalry!" he muttered. "If we were surrounded, they'd cut us down to a man! We have discovered the enemy with a vengeance!"

He felt that there had been a blunder somewhere, but now was no time to speculate upon this. Major

Okopa must be warned, and also Ben, and then the whole of the Japanese detachment must retreat to some point of safety.

But scarcely had this entered his head when he remembered something which caused him fresh alarm. The road the Cossacks were on was the very one Ben and his detachment had traveled. Was it possible the detachment had been surprised and either killed or made prisoners?

CHAPTER XVIII

FACE TO FACE WITH A LEOPARD

GILBERT spoke to the men under him, and in a moment more the detachment was on its way down the mountain side. All realized the peril of the situation and knew that every minute was precious. They moved onward as rapidly as the rough trail allowed, those ahead keeping their eyes on the alert for the possible appearance of additional danger.

From a great distance came two shots, followed by a third. No soldiers were to be seen in that direction, and the young officer concluded that the shots were meant as a signal.

"Those Cossacks are going to hem us in, if they can," he thought. "This is a mess truly."

With his glasses he mounted another hill, at the same time ordering his men to move on as before. He knew he could trust Satmo to conduct the expedition back into the valley, and he wanted to learn, if possible, just how many of the Russian cavalry were in that vicinity.

The way to the top of the hill was around a rocky

cliff,—that already mentioned. The trail here was rather dangerous, for the cliff was on one side and a deep ravine on the other. To make his way up to the top of the hill quicker, Gilbert dropped part of his outfit in a convenient place.

In five minutes more the young American had secured a position where he could see almost as well as from the mountain top behind him. But, to his chagrin, all of the Cossacks had disappeared, nor could he find the least trace of them.

“Perhaps they have discovered we are watching them,” he reasoned. “I hope they fall back. It will give us a chance to do likewise.”

Having satisfied himself that nothing could be gained by remaining at the top of the hill, the young officer picked his way back to the trail at the point where it wound round the cliff.

Scarcely had Gilbert reached the trail when he heard a wild clatter of hoofs coming toward him. He stopped in surprise, wondering if any of the Russian cavalymen were coming that way.

“Perhaps I’d better get out of sight,” he thought, but ere he could put his plan into execution he saw the cause of the disturbance. Some pack-horses belonging to their own train had run away, and were coming toward him at a furious pace.

Had the trail been wider the young American

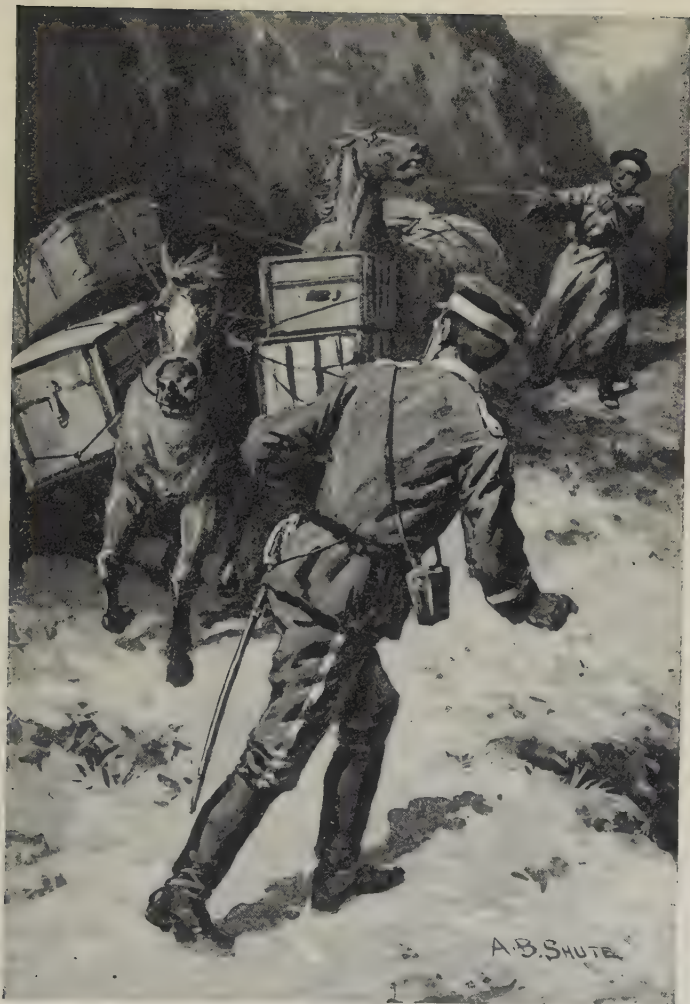
could have avoided the horses easily. But the foremost was heavily loaded with boxes, and took up the entire trail. Behind the first came a second runaway, the latter having a rope attached to it. A coolie had hold of the end of the rope, and was yelling loudly in an endeavor to stop both horses.

Gilbert saw his peril and wondered what he had best do to save himself. The runaways were bounding forward at a furious pace, and he realized that it was out of the question to turn back and outstrip them, or climb up the cliff before him.

There was no time to think further, for the front horse was already but a few paces away. He gave a shout and threw up his hands, but the runaway did not heed him. Then, as the animal was about to strike him and knock him down, he made a wild leap into the ravine below the cliff.

It was a daring thing to do, but not so reckless as may be imagined. The bottom and the sides of the ravine were covered with a growth of pine, ash, and birch, and also some trailing plants, for which Korea is famous.

Gilbert had noted the top of a particularly dense pine tree and for this he leaped. By good luck he struck the tree fairly, coming down among a number of boughs which were as springy as one could wish. He clutched at the boughs, and thus stopped his



THE RUNAWAYS WERE BOUNGING FORWARD AT A FURIOUS
PACE. — *Page 170.*

progress before striking the rocky ground below. As he did this the runaways above shot past him, the coolie and some others of the pack train following.

"Well, that was a narrow escape," thought the young captain. "I wonder what made the pack animals run away?"

Now was no time to speculate on the subject, and after getting back his wind, he descended to the ground beneath the tree.

The young American found himself in a dense forest. The pines predominated, but birches and ashes were not lacking, and he also noted several limes, maples, and junipers. Under the tree it was dark and chilly, and he could not help but shiver.

At first he thought to shout to those on the trail, but by the time he was in a position to do this not a soul was in sight.

"I've got to find my way back to that trail somehow," was his mental observation. "And the quicker the better."

The forest was a wild place, which the ax of the woodman had as yet not disturbed. Consequently the underbrush was thick and he had all he could do to make any progress.

It must be admitted that Gilbert did not like the idea of tramping through that dense growth alone. He had read up on Korea since joining the army,

and had been astonished to learn that the mountain wilds contained such savage beasts as tigers, leopards, bears, and wildcats, as well as numerous species of deer and foxes, badgers and martens. There were also numerous black eagles—he had already seen many of these—and pheasants, hawks, herons, magpies, jays, king-fishers, kites, and orioles.

“I don’t think I’d care to meet a tiger,” was his thought. “I’m afraid I’d make a poor showing against such a powerful beast as that.”

As he could not reach the trail he had left so suddenly by a direct course, he took a circuitous way, which soon brought him deeper and deeper into the forest. Then he found himself in a jungle of trailing vines where further advance was impossible.

“Another mistake!” he groaned, half aloud. “I reckon I’d better give up being a soldier and go back to private life.”

There was nothing to do but to turn back, and this he did without delay. He had scarcely passed along a distance of three rods when he heard a sound in the brushwood on his right.

Something was moving there, but what it was he could not imagine. Coming to a halt, he drew his pistol and gazed ahead searchingly.

“It must be some wild animal,” he said to him-

self, and the thought had scarcely crossed his mind when he heard a swish and saw several limbs of a tree shake violently.

Gilbert was not much of a hunter, but he was certain that only some beast of good size could make such a leap and be able to shake the tree limbs as those before him had been shaken.

If the young captain had been in a quandary on the trail when the runaway horses were bearing down upon him, he was even in more of a dilemma now. He did not care to advance and did not know if it would be safe to retreat. The beast, whatever it was, might be watching him, and might pounce upon him the instant his back was turned.

At last he began to back out, but with his eyes still fixed upon the tree the limbs of which he had seen shake. Thus he covered several yards, when he saw two of the boughs shake once more, and felt by instinct that the creature, whatever it was, had leaped into another tree still closer to him.

By this time Gilbert's heart was beating rapidly. He felt he had an enemy to face fully as dangerous as a Cossack sharpshooter. That the beast was after him there could be no doubt.

He continued to back away, at the same time holding his pistol in one hand and his sword in the other. In this fashion he presently came to where a fallen

tree lay partly concealed in the grass and brush-wood. Almost before he knew it, he tripped on the tree and went down on his back.

As he fell there was a fierce growl among the trees before him, and of a sudden a half-grown leopard crept softly into view, crouching low on a limb the end of which was within a few feet of the young American's head.

Even though he was down on his back Gilbert saw the beast, and taking quick aim, he fired. At the same moment the leopard made a wild leap, intending to land upon the young captain's breast.

Gilbert's bullet had been intended for the savage beast's right eye, but instead it took the leopard in the shoulder, inflicting a severe but by no means mortal wound. The shot made the creature turn in its course, and it landed close to Gilbert's feet.

In many a battle the young officer had come to close quarters, and had thus learned how to turn himself in an emergency. Agitated though he was, he kept his presence of mind, and as quick as a flash fired at the leopard a second time, and then a third. He also brought his sword into play by making a lunge at the beast's gleaming teeth. Down came the teeth with a click on the shining blade, and the weapon was wrenched from Gilbert's grasp. But this brought him to his feet, and once more he fired,

with his pistol less than two feet from the leopard's head.

The last shot was a telling one, and the leopard rolled over and over, snapping and snarling in a furious fashion. Then it leaped up and dragged itself off through the brushwood, growling in a fashion which told that its end could not be far off.

At first Gilbert was inclined to let the beast depart. But then he thought the leopard might come back to renew the attack, and leaping into the brushwood, he quickly fired another shot. This pierced the beast's vitals, and leaping into the air, it fell to the ground, stretched out, and breathed its last.

It was not until the fight was over that Gilbert realized that he was in a cold perspiration. He felt a strange weakness at the knees and sank down on a rock, where he lost no time in reloading the revolver which had proved such a friend.

"That's the last time I want to come face to face with a leopard," he told himself, as he surveyed the dead creature. "I came out here to fight Russians, not wild animals."

Leaving the leopard where it was, he continued to make his way as best he could toward the cliff. But the tangle of brushwood appeared as dense at one point as another, and finally he did not know which way to turn.

"I'm in a pickle!" he groaned, half aloud. "And how to get out is a mystery."

Finding he could not get close to the cliff, he determined to pursue a course in the opposite direction, hoping thereby to gain another trail over the hills which would take him, sooner or later, to the main road where he had left Major Okopa's command.

Five minutes later he found a narrow trail, which led to the northward. He followed up this trail for nearly half a mile, when he came within sight of several native huts. Nobody was around the huts, and they looked to be deserted.

"The natives must have been scared off by the war," he thought, when from one of the huts came a Cossack cavalryman. The Cossack moved to another hut, and from this brought forth a horse, which he proceeded to mount. Soon he was out of sight down the trail.

The unexpected appearance of the enemy, so close at hand, perplexed Gilbert and he knew not what to do next. Then he decided to make an investigation of all the huts and see if any more Cossacks were around.

"I'd like to bag some of those fellows," he reasoned, and moved forward through some brushwood, never dreaming of the surprise in store for him.

CHAPTER XIX

GILBERT MAKES A PRISONER

ONE of the Korean huts was close to some bushes beside the trail, and the young captain had but little difficulty in approaching it without laying himself liable to being seen by any others of the enemy who might be near at hand.

This hut contained two horses, and he rightfully surmised by this that two more Cossacks must be in that vicinity.

Crawling between that hut and the next, he heard a murmur of voices. It came from the last hut of the row. The Cossacks were talking in their own dialect, and what was being said the young American could not make out.

Feeling the second hut must be vacant, Gilbert slipped into this. He had his pistol in his hand, and his sword where he could bring it into play at a moment's notice.

The murmur of voices now came clearer, and presently Gilbert heard another voice. Much to his amazement this last voice was speaking in English!

"I don't understand such jargon," was what was said. "Can't you talk United States?"

"Ben Russell, as sure as fate," said Gilbert to himself. "Now how in creation did he get here?"

There could be but one answer to this question—Ben had been captured, just as he had before feared. More than likely the men of his detachment were also prisoners, or else shot down.

"I must save Ben, no matter at what cost," Gilbert told himself. The idea of deserting his old chum never once entered his head.

Watching his opportunity, the young captain left the hut he had entered, and slipped to the rear of that in which were the Cossacks and their prisoner. Gazing through a slit Gilbert saw Ben, with his hands tied behind him, sitting on a small bench, while before him, with sabers drawn, stood two burly cavalymen. Their faces were dark and forbidding, and they looked as if they considered that the American had no rights which they were bound to respect. As a matter of fact, it enraged them greatly to learn that an American would dare throw in his fortunes with those fighting under the Mikado's flag.

From where he stood, Gilbert could have fired point-blank at the Cossacks and likely killed the

pair on the spot. But he had no desire to shed blood in such a reckless fashion, even though his chum was a prisoner. He determined to watch for a favorable opportunity when he might dash in and give Ben his freedom.

The chance was not long in coming. Having talked for a minute between themselves, one of the Cossacks stepped out of the hut, and hurried to his horse. Soon he was off, going in the same direction the first cavalryman had taken.

Without hesitation, Gilbert now stepped to the front of the hut. He covered the Cossack inside with his pistol.

"Gilbert!" ejaculated Ben, in glad surprise. "Well, this is lucky, to say the least."

At these words, and at the shadow behind him, the Cossack swung around quickly. When he saw the young captain and the gleaming barrel of the pistol, his face fell and he muttered a loud exclamation which Gilbert did not understand.

"Throw up your hands!" said the young American, in Russian.

The hands went up slowly, one still holding the saber, which the Cossack was itching to use.

"Drop that saber!" was Gilbert's next order. "Drop it at once!"

Again the cavalryman hesitated. But he did not

like the look in the young American's eye, and with a clatter the blade fell to the floor of the hut.

The young captain next compelled the Cossack to march into a corner, facing the angle. Then, as Ben backed up to him, Gilbert cut the cord which bound his hands together.

"Good for you, Gilbert," cried Ben, as he picked up the saber. "You certainly got here in the nick of time. Are your men outside?"

At this Gilbert shook his head. "I'm alone," he said. "But I shouldn't like to have that fellow know it."

"What became of your men?"

"They started to return to the main body of our command. What of yours?"

"We fell in with some of the Cossacks and had a pretty warm fight for a few minutes. Then most of my men fled. I was surrounded and captured, and three of the Cossacks brought me here. I think they take me for a spy."

No time was lost after this in tying the hands of the Cossack in the corner. Then Gilbert asked the fellow a number of questions in Russian, but got little satisfaction.

"Why not search him?" suggested Ben, and this was done. The prisoner objected roundly, but it was of no avail. In an inner pocket was found a

map of the mountains and trails, and some sort of an order written in Russian.

"I believe this chap is a spy!" cried Gilbert. "We must take him back to the Japanese camp by all means."

"Easy enough to say, Gilbert. But you must remember that these hills are full of the enemy."

"We must watch our chances."

Both deemed it unsafe to remain at the huts, and a little later they moved off, taking the cavalryman's horse with them.

Gilbert and Ben took turns in riding, the one on foot keeping watch on the Cossack so that he might not attempt to run away.

For once fortune favored them, for scarcely had they covered a mile when they came to a much broader trail. At a distance they heard voices, and soon came in sight of some of their own pack train, while ahead was Major Okopa's command, hurrying along on the double-quick, to get out of the reach of the Cossacks.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the major, when he caught sight of the two Americans. "Where have you been, and how does it happen that you are together?"

"It's a long story, major," answered Gilbert. "See, we have a prisoner. We think he is a spy."

We took these from him." And the young captain showed the map and paper.

The Japanese major was keenly interested, and took possession of the documents. The Cossack was turned over to a detail, and the soldiers were cautioned to watch him closely, which they did.

Gilbert soon found that his men under Satmo had rejoined the main body without mishap, and that the runaway horses had been brought in after a most exciting chase by the hostlers and coolies. Of Ben's detachment all but one man was on hand. The missing man came into camp twenty-four hours later.

Major Okopa had now learned all that he had set out to ascertain and, as a consequence, no time was lost in falling back to where the main body of the Japanese army lay.

His trying experience at the cliff, and afterward, had worn Gilbert out, and he was glad enough to rest for several days after the regular camp was reached. During that time the Cossack brought in was examined. Fortunately for him, it could not be proved that he was a spy—in which case he would have been shot—so he was placed among the ordinary prisoners, much to his satisfaction. Gilbert was congratulated on securing the man so cleverly and also on having aided Ben to escape.

Owing to the spring thaws the roads were now all but impassable, and before the Japanese army as a whole could move forward towards the Yalu a large portion of the roadbed had to be repaired. For the heavy artillery logs had to be laid, and day after day the engineering corps were kept busy, bringing in logs from the surrounding forests.

The middle of March found our friends located at An-ju, on the highway leading to Chong-ju. More troops were coming to the front rapidly, and it was rumored that the Russians were massing at the last-named point. On the 28th there was a small engagement, which resulted in a score being killed or wounded, on either side. As the Japanese pushed more troops to the front the Russians retired to Wi-ju and other points close to the southern bank of the Yalu. But even these points could not be held by them, and then they began to mass on the northern bank of the river, where they determined to offer a stubborn resistance to all further Japanese progress.

"This is going to be a war on a large scale after all," observed Gilbert, as he watched some new regiments coming in. "We must have forty or fifty thousand men here already."

"The Japanese realize that they have no small nation to deal with," answered another officer, who

stood near. "They know that Russia can put as large an army in the field as any country in the world."

"There is going to be a hard fight when it comes to crossing the Yalu," put in Ben. "I'll wager the Russians will contest every inch of the way," and in that surmise he was correct.

After the enemy had been driven to the northern bank of the stream, General Kuroki planted his left flank near the mouth of the Yalu, and spread out his right to a distance of almost twenty-five miles up the stream. Heavy artillery was brought up and located where it was thought it could do the most good (or rather, the most damage), and many advantageous positions were strongly fortified. In addition, materials for pontoon bridges were also carried forward, so that at the proper moment there would be no delay in getting across the Yalu—all providing the Russians would permit such a move.

While such work was going forward on the Japanese side the enemy was equally busy, hurrying soldiers to the scene, and bringing up guns just as heavy as their opponents. It is estimated that the Russians had about thirty thousand men in the vicinity of the Yalu. A large force was stationed at An-tung and another at Yung-tien, and troops were also located as far to the northeast as Kuan-

ten. The Korean road and gate were particularly well guarded, and spies were sent out constantly to inform the Russian commanders when an attack might be expected. But the Japanese, well known for their secrecy, kept their plans to themselves, so that, finally, the opening of the great battle of the Yalu came to the Russians largely in the nature of a surprise.

CHAPTER XX

THE SINKING OF THE "PETROPAVLOVSKI"

WHILE the Japanese troops in Korea were preparing to attack the Russians at the Yalu River news came to the front of the destruction of a large warship stationed in Port Arthur harbor.

This vessel was the Russian battleship *Petropavlovski*, the flagship of Admiral Makaroff. She was one of the largest ships in the Russian navy and carried between seven hundred and eight hundred men.

The destruction of this magnificent vessel came about in rather a peculiar manner. For a long while the Russian fleet had remained in the harbor at Port Arthur, refusing to come out and fight the Japanese fleet on the high seas, away from the protection of the land batteries.

As a ruse the Japanese admiral sent forward, one misty morning, a small squadron of fighting ships of the second class, which began a vigorous but rather useless bombardment. In the meantime the big Japanese battleships kept entirely out of sight.

Seeing no ships but the little ones, the Russian admiral lost no time in going forth to meet the enemy. At once the Japanese warships retreated, but did it so slowly that the Russian ships were led on and on, until they were about fifteen miles out to sea. As soon as this was accomplished a wireless message to the big Japanese ships was forwarded, and they at once put on all steam, to get behind the enemy, and thus cut the Russians off from the harbor, in which case they would no longer have the aid of the land batteries, and would have to face, in the open sea, a force considerably larger than their own.

The plan was well laid and would have succeeded had it not been for a sudden change in the weather. Quite unexpectedly a stiff breeze sprang up, blowing the mist away. As soon as the sun began to peep through the clouds the Japanese warships trying to get behind the Russians were discovered, and Admiral Makaroff at once signaled to his fleet to return to the harbor with all speed.

Disappointed at being unable to surround his enemy, Admiral Togo put on all steam and went in pursuit, and then began a chase such as has not been seen since Admiral Cervera was followed by our own warships from out of Santiago harbor. Back for Port Arthur went the Russian vessels, battle-

ships, cruisers, and all, steaming as they had never steamed before.

In coming out of the harbor the Russian ships had carefully avoided the numerous mines planted there. But they knew little about the Japanese torpedoes placed to do them harm, and without warning the *Petropavlovski* came upon one of these.

A dull report was heard, and a great cloud of greenish-white water and smoke arose in the air. Then, as the big battleship was seen to lurch to one side, came another report, louder than the first, and once more the water flew in all directions, while this time a heavy cloud of black smoke arose in the air, mingled with wreckage and the forms of officers and sailors.

An instant later the battleship gave another lurch, swayed unsteadily for a moment, and then burst into flames from stem to stern. As the horrified onlookers gazed at the spectacle the ship swayed again, turned over on her side, and then, with a strange hissing and roaring, disappeared beneath the waves, carrying her gallant admiral and over six hundred officers and sailors with her.

For the time being there was utter confusion in the Russian squadron and the other vessels scarcely knew what to do. One ship, the *Poltava*, put out several small boats and succeeded in saving seven

officers, seventy-three sailors, and also the Grand Duke Cyril, who chanced to be on board.

The Russian squadron was now close to a place of safety, but their troubles were not yet over. Only a few minutes later, a mine exploded close to the side of the *Pobieda*, tearing a great hole in the battleship. But as good fortune would have it, this explosion failed to set off any of the magazines, as had been the case with the flagship, and with her bulkheads tightly closed, the crippled vessel managed to get to her anchorage without further mishaps.

The loss of the great battleship *Petropavlovski* was a great blow to Russia, and when the news of the disaster reached that country everybody went into mourning. Many officers of reputation happened to be on board of the ship when she sank, and some of the bodies have never been recovered. It may be mentioned here that the battleship also had on board the famous Russian artist, Verestchagin, well known the world over for his war paintings. Just before the first explosion came he was seen on the deck, sketch-book in hand, making a pencil drawing. It was his last bit of work, for he went down with the ship.

"That must have been a horrible sight," said Gilbert, to Ben, when they were discussing this bit

of news. "Think of the hundreds of officers and sailors that were drowned."

"It puts me in mind of the sinking of our battleship *Maine*, in Havana harbor," returned Ben.

"Somehow, the Russians don't seem to be able to do a thing on the water," went on Gilbert. "They have sunk or disabled a few small Japanese ships, but that is all, while they have lost some of the very best warships they possessed."

"I take it that the Japanese gunners are well trained, Gilbert. They have sent their young naval officers to America and to Europe to learn all they possibly could, and being ambitious to make a record they are doing their level best—while the Russians seem to be satisfied to rest on laurels gained years ago. If the Czar wants to do anything he has got to wake up."

"I see the Japanese warships are keeping right at Port Arthur. The bombardments must be something terrific."

"No doubt they are. More than likely some of the residents of that town wish they were out of it."

"I'd like to know what has become of that Captain Barusky and Ivan Snokoff."

"Barusky likely has his hands full at the port. A sneak like Snokoff will probably keep as far from

danger as he can. Such rascals have no use for fighting."

Early the following morning Major Okopa's command moved forward once more, along with over four thousand of the Japanese troops, infantry and artillery. It was an inspiring sight, and despite the bad weather that had been experienced, and the awful condition of the roads, the majority of the troops were in good spirits.

"This is like a touch of old times in the Philippines," observed Gilbert, as the command swung along through a side road, cut through a heavy forest. "The jungle isn't quite as bad, but it is bad enough."

"Wonder how soon we'll get to some real fighting," came from Ben.

"Perhaps before we know it," answered his chum.

Gilbert was right—the fighting came that very day, just before sundown. Shots were heard ahead, and soon the advance guard came running back with the news that a Russian regiment had taken a stand on a small hill half a mile away.

This news acted like magic on the Japanese soldiers. As tired as they were from the day's tramp, and despite the fact that they had had only a lunch at midday, and wanted their suppers, they set

up a ringing shout, in which the young American officers readily joined.

"Forward!" was the cry, in Japanese, and forward went one command after another, Major Okopa's battalion with the rest. The latter was ordered to move to the left, where some timber had been cut down the season before, leaving a field that was about half cleared and one studded with stumps and rocks.

"I see the Russians!" yelled Gilbert presently, and he was right. Almost at the same moment the enemy opened fire, and two of the University Corps went down badly wounded.

It was the "baptism of fire," as it is called by old soldiers, but the corps stood the shock well. Without wavering it swept along, among the stumps and rocks until the order came to halt and lie down. From this position volley after volley was discharged at the Russian infantry, which was lodged behind a row of trees at the edge of a thick patch of timber.

"They've got an advantage over us," said Gilbert. "Those trees are a great protection."

"Wait until Koshama's battery gets here," answered Major Okopa. "It will make a hornet's nest of the woods for them."

The battery was already in position, and soon

one of the guns was brought into play. The havoc along the edge of the timber patch was terrific, and in consternation the Russians fled.

"Hurrah! they are retreating!" shouted Ben, and leaped up, as did all those around him. Once more the Japanese soldiers swept forward, and in a few minutes were as deep into the forest as were the Russians. Here something of a hand-to-hand encounter took place, lasting probably fifteen minutes.

By this time Gilbert's fighting blood was thoroughly aroused and, with dreams of victories won in Cuba, Luzon, and in China, he rushed forward, sword in one hand and pistol in the other. Scarcely had he covered a distance of fifty yards when he found himself in the midst of the battle, with several Russians directly in front of him.

It was a moment of peril and nobody could have realized it better than did the young American captain. He discharged his pistol point-blank at one of the Russians and saw the fellow go down with a wound in his side. Then a gun was discharged close to his ear, the bullet fairly clipping his hair. He turned and with his sword made a lunge at the shooter, giving him a slight wound in the shoulder. As he did so one of his own men leaped to the front and shot the Russian through the throat, killing him instantly.

The battle was now a hot one on all sides. But the Russians knew they could not hold their ground, and they began slowly to retreat over the top of a hill, where, some days before they had had a battery planted. But orders had come to take the battery to the north side of the Yalu, and this order had been obeyed. There was some confusion, and in one instance twenty Russians were surrounded and taken prisoners. On the other hand six Japanese were killed and ten badly wounded.

Near the end of the engagement Gilbert found himself at the edge of a small brook which, some miles away, flowed into the Yalu. Ben's command was not far away, and both young Americans were fighting almost side by side. It was growing dark, so the enemy could be seen only with difficulty.

"Wonder how long this is going to last?" Gilbert asked himself. "We shall have to call it off pretty soon."

These thoughts had just crossed his mind, when without previous warning, three Russian soldiers came at him in a bunch.

"There is the American!" shouted one, in his native tongue. "Down with him! Such as he has no right to fight with the Japanese!"

A shot was fired, and Gilbert felt himself struck

lightly in the left arm. Another shot whistled past his face. He tried to dodge to one side, but hitting a rock, stumbled and fell. Then a Russian lieutenant saw his plight and leaped forward, sword in hand, to run him through and through.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BATTLE OF THE YALU

FOR the instant after he went down, Gilbert was too bewildered to do anything to save himself. The Russian lieutenant was so close the young American had no chance to dodge or roll out of the way.

But when the young captain was attacked by the three Russian privates, Ben saw the movement and lost no time in hurrying to his chum's assistance. He was just in time to meet the onslaught of the Russian lieutenant, and sword met sword in a clash which drew fire from both blades.

"Not so fast, my fine fellow!" cried Ben, who, as my old readers know, knew how to handle his blade perfectly. "Not so fast!" And watching his chance, he gave a turn that sent the Russian's blade flying into the air. Then he lunged at his enemy, but the fellow was too quick for him, and leaping back, he lost no time in taking to his heels and disappearing among the trees.

"Good for you, Ben," panted Gilbert, as he leaped up. "You stopped him just in the nick of time."

"Glad I was able to do it," was the laconic reply. "They thought they had you sure, didn't they?"

The battle was now on the wane, and a little later the Russians were in full retreat. The Japanese thought at first to follow them up, but were too tired and hungry to do so. The Russians lost no time in reaching the Yalu, and that night, under cover of darkness, made their way by one of the fords to the other side.

Following this battle—which, indeed, was little more than a brisk skirmish,—came several other encounters in that vicinity, in which, however, our friends did not participate. Meanwhile the Japanese general lost no time in massing his forces along the Yalu, as previously mentioned, bringing up his batteries to the most commanding positions, and making all in readiness for a battle which both sides knew would be long and bloody.

To understand the great battle so close at hand, it is necessary for a moment to look at the geography of the locality. The Yalu is a broad and rather shallow stream, bounded in some places by hills and in others by low, marshy land. Opposite to the town of Wiju, is the Manchurian river Ai, above which is a high spur of land called Husan, or Tiger Hill. Between this spur and the Korean side of the

Yalu is Kulido Island, and there is a ford to this island from each side of the river.

Some distance below where the Ai joins the Yalu the main river is cut into three channels by two islands, each about thirteen miles long. There are fords to both islands, but they are deep and dangerous, while the middle channel of the river can only be crossed by means of a bridge.

Following several skirmishes of slight importance, came a sharp attack by the Japanese on some Russian sharpshooters located on Kulido Island. This was at dawn on the 26th of April, and the Russians replied with vigor. But the Japanese fire proved too heavy for them, and presently they retreated to the mainland, being shelled by a battery located on a hill behind Wiju.

This was an opening the Japanese were looking for, and in a twinkling some boats were brought forth, and the troops either rowed or waded to the island. It may be mentioned here that among the troops to move to this new position were the sharpshooters to which Dan Casey and Carl Stummer belonged, and both distinguished themselves by what they did upon that occasion.

No sooner was the island in the possession of the Japanese than the Russians tried to retake it. But the fire of the Japanese battery was too fierce for

them, and at last they were compelled to retreat to a shelter under Tiger Hill.

While this fighting was going on to the north of Wiju, another division of the Japanese army crossed the two islands further down, and made preparations to cross from the second island to the north bank of the Yalu. Strange as it may seem, the engagement at this point was a small one and the losses were trifling on both sides.

The next day was given over largely to bridge-building by the Japanese. The Russians watched them closely, and did what they could to stop the work, but without success. The batteries on both sides were kept at work, and the Japanese fire was so destructive that the enemy was forced to keep back. In the meantime a large body of the Japanese army was marched far to the north of Wiju, and the next day constructed two pontoon bridges across the Yalu, and succeeded in landing on the north bank. With this division went the command to which Gilbert and Ben were attached.

It had been thought all along that the Russians would make a strong resistance at Tiger Hill, but much to the astonishment of the Japanese when they arrived there they found it deserted. This was due to a misunderstanding of orders among the Russians, for the next day they took command of the hill, the

Japanese being just then in no position to drive them away.

It was now that the Japanese showed their skill in generalship. Totally ignorant of the fact that a strong portion of the Japanese army was creeping up upon his left, the Russian commander at Tiger Hill began an engagement with the Japanese body on Kulido Island, directly in front of him. Slowly, but surely, the division from the north crept closer, coming over first one hill and then another. At last it came into sight unexpectedly, and that fact was announced throughout the Russian quarters.

"The advance must be stopped, and at once," was the order given, and the heavy artillery broke forth into a roar to be heard for miles, while the shrapnel whistled through the air in all directions. The Japanese batteries, now able to locate the field-pieces of the enemy by the smoke, also broke forth, until the din was terrific. By those who took part in this battle, a hillside was described as a perfect volcano, from which belched forth gray-black smoke and grim death.

In this great struggle the red banners of the Mikado's men were ever in the front—for Japanese armies invariably carry their flags where they should be carried, in the advance guard. This flag cheered the soldiers on to deeds of great valor, helping them

to cross the river at the two islands and in other places in the face of a fire that was as searching now as it had been uncertain in the days previous. The slaughter on every side was fearful, but as soon as one line melted away another sprang forward to take its place.

Neither Gilbert nor Ben got into the fight until about eleven o'clock in the morning. They had crossed the pontoon bridge nearest to Wiju with Major Okopa's command, and were marching along over the hills in the direction of Tiger Hill.

"The battle is on now for certain," exclaimed Gilbert, as he listened to the thunder of artillery in the distance.

"I hope it is going in our favor," answered Ben, who had chanced to come up. "My, just listen to that," he went on, as the din became heavier than ever.

"Sounds as if both sides had every battery into play," went on Gilbert.

Soon after this they were ordered to move forward on the double-quick. Away went the soldiers, each carrying his heavy baggage and his gun as if they weighed nothing at all.

The battalion had been discovered by a Russian battery, and soon came some shells which did considerable damage. They could not reply to this, but

kept on, until a grove of trees gave them temporary relief. Their course was now almost directly for Tiger Hill.

The shock of battle to follow was probably the heaviest that the young Americans had ever experienced. At first they had the Russian batteries to overcome, and then they found themselves face to face with several Russian regiments well-known for their heroism and soldierly qualities. It was a fight "to the finish," as Ben afterward expressed it, and every foot of the ground was contested.

"Phew! but this is fighting," declared Gilbert, after they had been at it for several hours. "Talk about getting into close quarters. If we are beaten, we'll be caught like rats in a trap."

"But we are not going to be beaten, Gilbert," answered his chum. "Just listen to that."

Close at hand a Japanese regiment was fighting desperately. The flags were to the front, and each soldier was yelling "*Banzai!*" at the top of his lungs. They had often shouted that word themselves, for *Banzai* is the Japanese for hurrah.

They were now going up Tiger Hill proper. On all sides the shells were dropping, and the hillside was thick with smoke and with the bodies of the dead and the wounded. The sight was enough to sicken them, but they did not dare to give it a second

thought. They must do or die, that was all there was to it.

“Forward—for the honor of Japan!” was the Japanese cry. “Forward for the Mikado!” And forward they did go, up one rocky slope after another. And while this advance was being made, a Japanese flotilla of gunboats steamed up the Yalu as far as Antung, shelling that town and also several other Russian strongholds.

Pressed from in front and on both sides, the Russian commander at Tiger Hill knew not what to do, and was gradually forced to retreat, which he did by crossing the Ai River not far above where that stream flows into the Yalu. Here were some hills, and he lost no time in fortifying them as best he could. It is said that he wished to retreat still further, but his superiors would not allow him to do so.

The attack on Tiger Hill had occurred on Saturday, and that night it is safe to say nearly all of the soldiers on both sides were all but exhausted. Gilbert and Ben could scarcely stand, and the same was true of Major Okopa.

“I wonder if we’ll have to fight to-morrow,” said Ben, as they sat eating a very late supper.

“To be sure,” answered Gilbert. “Now we’ve got the Russians on the run it would be most unwise to let them rest.”

"It's wonderful what our men can endure. Even the students seem to have iron constitutions."

There was little sleep that night, and by dawn the call to arms was renewed. The command had been resting close to the top of Tiger Hill. Now it was ordered to take its place with the advance across the Ai River, which was to be forded in the face of the foe intrenched on the opposite shore.

The troops which had crossed by way of Kulido Island were close at hand, and just before the march to the river started Gilbert and Ben heard a call in a familiar voice, and beheld Dan Casey running towards them.

"Well, av all things," cried the Irish sharpshooter, as he shook hands. "Sure an' I didn't expect to mate you in such a shpot as this!"

"How have you been, Casey?" questioned Gilbert.

"First-rate, barrin' a scratch I got from a shell yesterday." The Irishman's eyes twinkled. "Sure an' it was a regular Donnybrook fair, wasn't it?"

"I should say it was—three Donnybrooks rolled into one," laughed Ben. "But where is Stummer? Gilbert said he was with you."

"Here he comes now," was the reply, and a moment later the German sharpshooter came up and

almost hugged Ben, and then shook hands with Gilbert.

"I dink me you vos not go py der var after all," he said to Gilbert. "So you vos captains, hey? I vos glad to hear dot. Maype you ton't vos fightin' a leetle yesterday alretty? I told Tan it vos a hornet's nest—chust like dot pattle of San Juan Hill py Cuby."

"Were you touched, Carl?"

"Yah, but I ton't know it bis der pattle vos ofer. Den I see plood running mine leg town, und I got me shot chust ofer der knee. But it vos noddings und I ton't go to no doctor. Tan, he pound it up for me," concluded Carl Stummer; and there the talk had to come to an end.

CHAPTER XXII

CROSSING THE RIVER

DESPITE the fact that there had been some hand-to-hand conflicts, the great battle of the Yalu had so far been largely one of artillery. Many batteries had been brought into play, and fearful execution had been rendered, both on the islands and on either side of the broad river and near the mouth of the Ai.

But now this was to be changed. Just in front of Tiger Hill rested four miles of Japanese soldiers, awaiting the order to ford the stream as best they could, and storm the Russian position before them. Other soldiers were on the islands, also in readiness to cross. This was on Sunday morning, May 1, 1904,—a date well worth remembering.

Before dawn the Japanese commander-in-chief had everything in readiness for the advance. The soldiers were close to the water front, but screened from view by low hills and small patches of timber.

"Forward," came the command for Major Okopa's battalion, about seven o'clock, and in less than a minute they were on the move. As luck

would have it, they were placed next to the sharpshooters to which Casey and Stummer belonged, and the two commands started to cross the Ai less than a hundred feet apart.

The Japanese batteries had already "opened the ball," as Ben termed it, doing their best to disclose the batteries of the enemy. But General Kashtalinsky had learned a lesson the day before, and did not allow a shot to be fired in return until the troops of the Mikado absolutely compelled him to do so. Then his batteries roared forth as never before, doing execution that was frightful in the extreme.

The advance of the Japanese to the water's edge was in open-front order. But the fords were narrow, and as a consequence the infantry had to bunch up the instant they entered the stream. They now formed an excellent target for the Russians behind the hills of the other shore, and man after man dropped, as bullets and shrapnel came whistling in that direction. But the advance was not checked, those in the rear fairly pushing those in front ahead. As the batteries of the Mikado had now discovered the position of the enemy's guns, they did all they could to silence the pieces. This bombardment was deafening and created a great smoke which swept along the river like a pall.

Along with their commands, Gilbert and Ben

plunged into the stream, which at some points in the fords was waist-deep. The footing was slippery, and they had to be careful to keep from going down. Some did fall, among them Carl Stummer, who struck on his back with a loud splash and then disappeared for a second.

"Hullo, Carl, are ye hit?" sang out Dan Casey, who was close by.

"No, I ton't vos hit," spluttered the German sharpshooter. "Put I got me apout a gallon of vater in alretty! Of I known der rifer vos so schlipperry, I but me sbikes mine shoes in, hey?"

"'Twouldn't be a bad idea," answered Casey, with a grin. "But come on, onless ye want to be lift behind," and forward he raced, to rejoin those who had plunged ahead.

As the infantry gained the middle of the stream the fire of the Russians became hotter than ever. Soldiers went down by the score, some few killed and the rest wounded. Of the latter, sad to relate, many were drowned before they could be picked up.

As Gilbert plunged on, he and his command drew closer to the sharpshooters who were following Dan Casey. The gallant Irishman was shouting and hurraing wildly, and waving his hand for the others to hurry up.

"Come, b'ys, come," he called, regardless of the

fact that nearly all the Japanese understood not a word of what he said. "Come, I tell ye! Be th' first to make the Roossians run an' win a medal! Don't be after actin' like ye had lead in yer feet! *Banzai!*"

The last word was understood, and "*Banzai,*" ran all along the line. The Irishman was well liked by all who knew him, and his courageous spirit made those around him press forward more eagerly than ever.

Like Stummer, Ben had slipped in the water, and this placed him a little behind Gilbert. The latter and Casey were almost side by side,—each in water up to his waist.

Suddenly Gilbert saw the Irishman throw up both hands and clutch at the air. His heart almost stopped beating, for he knew that such a movement could mean but one thing—that Casey had been wounded. Then he saw the Irishman pitch headlong into the stream and disappear.

"Dan," he called, and at that moment he realized how much he thought of this comrade of so many fights. He plunged forward and felt around in the stream. Bullets were whistling all around him, but to these he just then paid no attention. If Casey was still alive, he felt he must do all in his power to save him from drowning.

At last he got hold of the Irish sharpshooter, and with a strong effort he raised his wounded comrade from the water. The poor fellow was breathing heavily and spluttering.

"Where are you hit, Dan?" he asked quickly.

"In th—the side. Oh!" And then Casey closed his eyes and went off into a faint.

For the moment Gilbert did not know what to do; the next he had his comrade of many fights over his shoulder, and was rushing forward as fast as before. Luckily the shore was not far away, and in a few minutes he gained the shelter of some brushwood, just as Carl Stummer came after him.

"Vat's der madder mit Tan?"

"He is wounded, Carl. Come, let us see if we can't do something for him."

An examination revealed the fact that Casey had received a bullet through his right side. Gilbert was no surgeon, but experience told him that while the hurt was bad enough it would probably not be fatal. He tore off the sleeve of his shirt for a bandage, and bound up the wound as well as his limited means permitted, Stummer assisting.

"Can you look after him now, Carl? I must re-join my company, I suppose."

"Yah, I look after him," answered the German

sharpshooter. "Poor Tan! and he vos vonts to fight so pad, too."

"Fortunes of war," returned Gilbert laconically; and then he ran off at top speed, in the direction Major Okopa's command had taken.

He found the battalion fighting desperately. They were moving up a long hill, at the top of which was planted a Russian battery. To the left was a long line of intrenchments, filled with Russian soldiers, and bullets and shells were whistling and screaming through the air as thickly as ever.

Had the infantry been compelled to face what was before them unaided, the Japanese victory might not have been so complete. But the Japanese batteries had now located the Russian intrenchments, and shells and shrapnel were poured into them, turning them into veritable slaughter pens. But from these same intrenchments the enemy fired steadily on the advancing sons of Nippon, and many a red banner went down in the dust and smoke.

At last Gilbert and Ben found themselves close together once more. The companies were climbing from rock to rock up the long slope, utilizing every shelter as best they could. All around them the battle continued, up and down and across the river.

"Hurrah, the Russians are retreating!" was the cry of the Japanese, about ten o'clock. The news

proved true, some of the batteries and infantry were moving back to Hon-mu-tang, on the road to Feng-wang-cheng.

The fact that the enemy was falling back was hailed with savage delight by the Japanese, and forward they went with vigor, charging over the wide plain behind the hill. Here occurred some bloody hand-to-hand conflicts, and one Russian regiment, the Eleventh Siberian, was almost surrounded and captured. But a priest who chanced to be along ordered a bayonet charge, and led the way to safety by running ahead, holding aloft a crucifix.

Antung had been abandoned, the Russians setting fire to the town before leaving, and now Kiu-lien-cheng was likewise evacuated. Re-enforcements were expected by the soldiers of the Czar, but they did not come up in time to be of use in stemming the sweeping advance of the Japanese.

It was now that Gilbert and Ben fully realized what the Japanese soldiers could do when put to it. They fought like very demons and never seemed to grow weary of charging and of using either gun or bayonet. Many were without ammunition, but to this they gave scant attention. Those who were wounded but slightly still kept at the struggle, with blood pouring from their faces and bodies. They were fighting for their beloved Mikado and fair

Nippon, and to die would be glory. Never once, even under the heaviest fire, did they think of retreating.

"We haven't learned the meaning of that word," said Major Okopa grimly, to Gilbert, as he wiped the sweat of battle from his brow. "Were some to retreat without orders, I imagine they would be court-martialed and beheaded."

But all battles must come to an end sooner or later, and by sundown the great struggle for the Yalu was over, and the victory was entirely in the hands of the Japanese, while the Russians were well on the way to Feng-wang-cheng. The battle had thoroughly exhausted both sides, and the Japanese were content to rest on their laurels, while the Russians did what they could to reorganize their shattered forces and construct a new line of defense.

The great battle of the Yalu was remarkable in more ways than one. For the first time in history a well-organized European army was defeated by an army of the Asiatic race. The Japanese had proved themselves not only masters of the art of war on the sea but also on land, and the victory was so complete that it left no room for doubt. In the future Japan would have to be reckoned with as one of the world powers.

CHAPTER XXIII

AMONG THE RUSSIAN SPIES

THE battle of the Yalu was followed by several days of rest for Gilbert and his friends, for which they were not sorry. In the fighting Ben had sustained a severe wrench of his left ankle, and he was content to take it easy in one of the houses of Kiu-lien-cheng, around which the University Corps were quartered.

Both Gilbert and Ben were anxious to learn how Dan Casey had fared, and the former lost no time in hunting up Carl Stummer and questioning him.

"Da vos took poor Tan to der temborary hospital," answered the German sharpshooter. "Der doctor said he couldn't fight yet a-vile."

"But he'll get over it?"

"Yah, he said Tan would git ofer it—put he must haf rest."

"How did you make out, Carl?"

"Oh, I dink me I knock out more as six Roosians, Gilpert. Ven Tan got shot I got mine tander

up, und I sailed in like neffer vos alretty. Say, put it vos a great fight, hey? ”

“ You are right.”

“ Vot you dinks ve vos going to do next? ”

“ Oh, we’ll follow them up,—as soon as we get into shape to do it. Our baggage trains have got to get across the river first—and we want re-enforcements, too, I imagine,” concluded the young captain.

It was not until a week after crossing the river that the Japanese army moved forward to Feng-wang-cheng, which the Russians abandoned without showing fight. In the meantime fair-sized Japanese forces landed at Pitsewo and Kin-chow, on the Liao-tung Peninsula, just north of Port Arthur, and cut off all telegraphic communications which the city had heretofore enjoyed with the outside world. This was a serious blow to the Russians at the port, but other blows far more serious were soon to follow.

The Russians at Dalny, the station just north of Port Arthur, were now growing anxious, and before long a large part of the seaport, which had cost many millions to build up, was blown up by them, and they prepared to evacuate the place.

The tide of war seemed to have set in strongly for the Japanese, but now came a setback which they

scarcely looked for. In another naval engagement off Port Arthur the armored cruiser *Yoshino* was rammed in the fog, and the battleship *Hatsuse* was sunk by a mine. It is said that by the sinking of these two ships the Japanese also lost upward of four hundred officers and sailors. In addition to this the Japanese lost several transports and merchant ships, destroyed or captured by the Russian fleet sailing from Vladivostok.

It could now be seen by the outside world what the general campaign of the Japanese army was to be. By landing forces above Port Arthur they virtually cut that place off from the rest of the world, and thus placed it in a state of siege. With the navy hammering from the water side, the army advanced closer and closer to hem in the place so that it would have to surrender or be destroyed. In order to keep back re-enforcements for the Russians, the army of the Yalu now began to advance toward Liao-Yang, on the railroad which connects Port Arthur with Mukden and other Russian strongholds further north.

It must not be supposed that the Russians gave the army under General Kuroki as much rest as many would have wished. There were constant skirmishes and small battles, and not a few were killed or wounded on both sides.

Spies were sent out constantly by both commanders to learn just what the enemy was doing. So far many Japanese spies had lost their lives, or been taken prisoners, yet the call for men for such duty was always answered eagerly.

One hot day early in July Gilbert and Ben found themselves on a trail leading over one of the hills far to the westward of Feng-wang-cheng. It had been reported that numerous Russian spies were in that vicinity, doing their best to get in and out of the Japanese lines. How the work was being carried on nobody seemed to know, and a detachment was sent out, under Major Okopa. The major had taken with him the two young Americans and six of his best sharpshooters.

"Well, the war seems to have come to an end in this vicinity," remarked Ben, as they moved along, past a forest on one side and a tall cornfield on the other. "What do you think of it, Gilbert?"

"I think the general is preparing for another such ten-strike as we made when we crossed the Yalu. What do you think, major?"

"I think so myself," answered the Japanese major, whose knowledge of English, thanks to Gilbert and Ben, was improving daily. "You must remember, we now have three armies in the field—one under our own general, one under General Oku, and a third

under General Nodzu. I believe that before long the greater portion of the three armies will unite, and then we shall drive General Kuropatkin clear back to Russia."

"They tell me the Russian commander has an immense force behind him."

"That may be true. But we have also large armies,—and you know how our men fight."

"Yes, they could not have done better," put in Ben.

"There is another thing to consider," went on the Japanese major. "We have no troubles at home to worry us, while Russia has troubles without number. She must always keep some soldiers at home, or there may break out a revolution which will annihilate her."

"Yes, I know that," said Gilbert. "Just the same, I hardly think this war is going to end this summer."

"I am afraid not," and the Japanese major sighed. "That is Russia's one hope—that she may wear Japan out. She has so many more people, and her resources are so much greater. But, should Russia win in the end, it will be at a cost that will stagger her and her financiers."

A little later the talk came to an end, because it was felt that a Russian detachment might be close

at hand. They had now passed into the cornfield and were moving toward a slight rise of ground. To the east and the west were heavy woods, and behind them a fair-sized brook, where all had stopped to get a drink, for the march had proved a tiresome one.

So far the only persons they had met on the way were Chinese farmers, all of whom bewailed the fact that an army was in the vicinity, and who wanted to know who was to pay for the crops stolen or destroyed.

They were just passing a farmhouse when, on glancing back, Gilbert caught sight of two bearded faces peeping at them from behind a haystack. The faces disappeared as soon as the young captain caught sight of them.

He did not report the matter at once, but called a halt as soon as the haystack was out of range and told Major Okopa of what he had seen.

"Let us go back instantly and investigate," said the Japanese officer.

"Hadn't we better be careful?" suggested Gilbert. "If they were Russians there may be more of them in the vicinity."

"Be prepared for anything that may happen."

The major took the lead in retracing the way to the farmhouse. As soon as the detachment came in

sight, one of the Chinese farmers emitted a long, low whistle.

It was evidently a signal, and several men were seen to pass out of the back of the farmhouse in the direction of a small barn close by. The men were in Chinese dress, but that they were Russians there could be no doubt.

"Halt!" cried Major Okopa, in Japanese, and repeated the command in Russian.

For reply, a shot was heard, and a bullet struck the brave officer in the shoulder. Then came other shots, aimed at the rest of the detachment. But no one else was hit, and they returned the fire as quickly as they could. Whether or not any of the enemy were reached they could not tell, for Russians and Chinese had now disappeared.

As Major Okopa fell Gilbert ran into the farmhouse, with Ben upon his heels. They saw a man disappearing into an inner apartment, and rushing forward Gilbert tripped him up. Then came a shot through a window, and Ben fired at the Russian who had aimed it, and the enemy fell in the grass outside. In the meantime the rest of the detachment went after some Russians and Chinese in the barn, and a fierce hand-to-hand struggle ensued.

With the major seriously, if not mortally

wounded, the command of the detachment fell upon Gilbert, and as quickly as he could he called his men together, and placed them behind a corn-crib which commanded a view both of the house and the barn. One man had been killed, and, among the Russians and Chinese, three were badly wounded.

"I think there are about three Chinese and about nine or ten Russians," said Ben, after the first excitement was over, and they had done what they could for the major. "The Chinese do not amount to much as fighters, but those Russians appear to know their business."

"I reckon we can show them that we know ours," replied Gilbert dryly.

"What do you propose to do?"

"Shoot them down as soon as they show themselves."

"Perhaps they won't show themselves."

"Yes, they will. Just look there!"

As the young captain spoke he pointed to a spot between the barn and the house. Here were piled some dry cornstalks. In some unaccountable manner the cornstalks had caught fire, and a stiff breeze that was blowing was sending the sparks flying in all directions.

"Good. I hope the sparks set fire to the barn,"

cried Ben, and hardly had he uttered the words when the roof and one side of the structure, which was very dry, burst into flames. The smoke rolled into the barn, and those inside had to either come out or be burned like rats in a trap.

CHAPTER XXIV

FIGHTING IN A STORM

“ HERE they come ! ”

It was Ben who uttered the cry, a few minutes after the smoke rolled into the barn, and he was right. Four of the Russians had found the spot too hot for comfort, and they rushed out with their guns in hand.

A volley from those hidden behind the haystack greeted the enemy, and two were killed outright and another wounded. The fourth ran behind the house, and a moment later he was followed by two Chinamen.

By this time the barn was in flames from top to bottom, and it was not long before the house also caught. Then came a fierce yelling from both the Russians and the Chinese, and all that were able to do so rushed through the smoke to the shelter of the nearest cornfield.

“ After them, men,” cried Gilbert, in Japanese, and he led the way, followed closely by Ben. Before the cornfield could be gained one of the Rus-

sians was hit in the leg and laid low. The others, with the Chinese, managed to make their escape.

"Well, that was a hot skirmish while it lasted," was Gilbert's comment, on returning to the vicinity of the house and the barn.

"Yes, and the worst of it is, that Major Okopa has been seriously wounded."

Leaving the buildings to burn down, the Japanese detachment counted up its loss. One man had been killed and two, including the major, wounded seriously. All were cared for as tenderly as possible, and then it was decided to return to camp without delay and report what had occurred.

"We didn't catch many Russian spies this trip," was Ben's comment, as they stalked along, the soldiers carrying the wounded ones between them.

"It was a surprise, no doubt of it," returned Gilbert, but he did not dream of the still greater surprise in store for them.

Less than a mile was covered when they heard a noise to their left. At first they imagined it was a band of Russians, and thought to seek shelter, but then they came upon a small body of Japanese soldiers, two companies in all, also bound for the camp.

"We've been on special outpost duty," said the officer in command, to Gilbert. "We have seen nothing of the enemy."

He was much surprised to learn of what had occurred, and readily consented to go after those who had caused the trouble. The two companies were separated, one to return to the camp with those who had been wounded, and the other to go on the hunt for the fleeing enemy.

Gilbert and Ben went with the latter command, taking two of their own soldiers with them.

"I don't know if this is a good move or not," said Gilbert. "But I should like to round up the fellows who knocked over poor Major Okopa."

"That's exactly the way I look at it," answered Ben. "And, for all we know, those rascals may be the very spies we want. You can depend upon it, they weren't so close to our lines for nothing."

The march was in the direction of the cornfield. Here the trail was soon struck. It led to the northwest, over a slight rise of ground and then along a small brook, into which it disappeared.

"I hope we have not lost it," was Gilbert's comment, as all came to a halt in perplexity.

But the trail was not so easily missed. Getting down close to the water, several of the Japanese soldiers made an examination which would have done credit to an Indian. Soon they announced that the trail led down the stream. It was followed up despite the fact that it was from a foot to two

feet under water, and a few rods away was found to lead directly into a patch of short timber.

The men were now ordered to move forward with caution, and each weapon was held in readiness for immediate use. It was growing dark rapidly, and there was every indication that the hot summer day was going to end in a violent thunderstorm.

"If it comes I imagine it will be a corker," was the way Ben expressed himself. "Don't you notice how close it is getting?"

"Yes, I've noticed that for the last hour. See, it is beginning to rain already."

The young captain was right. At first the drops came down scatteringly, then followed a steady downpour which increased rapidly.

Suddenly in the midst of this rain, one of the Japanese soldiers in advance gave the alarm. He had sighted two Russians, who instantly opened fire. At once the whole company of Japanese pressed forward.

The Russians who had fled earlier in the day had gotten to a spot where about a dozen others of their command were on guard—a lonely outpost such as were then scattered for many miles between Feng-wang-cheng and Liao-Yang and the railroad. Thinking the Japanese had come upon them in force, they

fought desperately, and the skirmish was brisk for fully quarter of an hour.

In this fight neither Gilbert nor Ben suffered any injury, although more than once they came to close quarters. Ben was driven against a tree by two Russian soldiers and almost bayoneted, but the Russians were attacked from behind and driven off. Gilbert was also attacked by a Russian officer, and the sword play lasted for fully a minute, when the Russian dropped back between some of his men, convinced, no doubt, that he had met his match.

In the meantime the storm increased in violence. The air was almost black, when a vivid flash of lightning blinded many of the fighters. Then came a deluge of rain, through which little or nothing could be seen. Taking advantage of this sudden burst of the tempest, the Russians began to retreat, and were soon lost to sight.

The Japanese were of a temper to follow, but in such a deluge this was simply impossible. The rain now came down in sheets, driven by a wind which was constantly increasing in violence.

"This is a storm and no mistake," cried Ben, as he slung the water from his cap. "Puts me in mind of some of the Philippine downpours."

"Yes, and those we had in Cuba, when everything

went sailing out of our camp," added Gilbert. "Gracious, but that lightning is sharp!"

He was right, the flashes were unusually brilliant and dazzled them. The whole atmosphere appeared to be charged with electricity, and the wind was now blowing little short of a hurricane.

"We had better withdraw from this forest," said the officer in command of the company. "It is dangerous to stay here in such lightning as this."

Everybody was willing, and one of the number suggested they move to where a slight rise of rocks would afford at least partial shelter. In making this move they had to cross the brook which has already figured in our story, and then turn an angle formed by a sharp rock backed up by several unusually large trees.

Gilbert and Ben were just at this angle, with some soldiers in front of them and some behind, when there came a flash of lightning more brilliant than any seen before. With this flash came an ear-splitting crash from the heavens, followed by another crash among the clump of trees.

Ben was dazed and so was Gilbert, and for the moment both stood transfixed, not realizing what had happened. Then Ben gave a glance at the trees and saw that one was swaying unsteadily in the wind.

"It's coming down!" he yelled. "It's coming down!" And he started to run to a place of safety, followed by the Japanese soldiers and their officers.

Gilbert heard his chum's cry, but did not realize at first what it meant. The lightning flash had produced a shock through his whole system, and he felt as if a thousand needles were being thrust into him at once.

"Run, Gilbert, run!" screamed Ben, when he saw that his chum did not move. "Run, or the tree'll come down on you."

"Wha—what?"

"Run, I say! Don't you see the tree is coming down?"

Gilbert now understood the words, and glanced toward the clump of trees. The largest was already over at an angle of forty-five degrees. In a moment more it was sure to hit the earth and crush everything beneath it.

Gilbert started to leap to a point of safety. But his legs were weak from the shock received, and he stumbled on the rocks and fell headlong.

As he went down the tree gave another crash and dropped ten or fifteen degrees more, so that some of the branch ends touched the prostrate captain's body.

Ben saw the danger fully, and gave a scream of

horror. Was it possible that he was going to see his chum mangled before his very eyes? He shivered, and an icy chill ran down his spine.

Then like a flash his mind was made up. He must save Gilbert at any cost. He turned back and crawled under the tree branches.

"Have a care!" shouted the Japanese captain. "Have a care! The tree is settling! You will be caught!"

"Oh, Ben!" gasped Gilbert. He could say no more, for a thick limb was pressing him to the earth and cutting off his wind.

"Give me your hand, Gilbert! There, that's it! Now try to pull yourself loose!"

"I—I can't do it! I—my clothing is caught, and I—I—"

"Here, turn around on your side—this way. Now see if you can't crawl out backwards."

Another crack of the tree drowned out the last of Ben's suggestion. But Gilbert understood and turned over. Then Ben pulled upon his chum's arm with all his strength.

"My—shirt—it's caught in that branch!" gasped Gilbert. "See—if—you can—haul—it—back!" He could scarcely speak.

Ben had hold of the branch before Gilbert had finished. He twisted it back by main strength. The

he held it with one hand, and pulled upon Gilbert with the other.

At last the young captain was free. But the tree was coming down now, and a great mass of branches settled slowly over both of the young Americans, hiding them completely from view in the rain and darkness.

CHAPTER XXV

ON THE MARCH

THE Japanese soldiers felt sure that both Gilbert and Ben had been crushed by the final sinking of the big tree, and they were much astonished to behold Ben crawling forth a minute later, dragging his chum with him.

"Are you hurt?" demanded the Japanese captain, as he ran up, for the danger from the monarch of the forest was now over.

"Only a few scratches," was Ben's answer.

"And your friend?"

"I—I—reckon I am all right," gasped Gilbert, struggling to his feet. "But I don't want to get quite so close to the lightning again."

"No, nor I," answered the captain, who had been just in front of Ben.

After this the whole party lost no time in making their way to the shelter of the rocks. At the best the protection here was not very good, but it was better than nothing, and nobody thought of complaining.

For fully an hour and a half the rain continued to come down in torrents until everybody was soaked to the skin. As it was warm, this was no great inconvenience so long as they kept out of the fierce wind which was blowing.

"It looks to me as if this storm was going to last all night," said Ben, and his surmise proved correct. For a while the wind let up a little, but at midnight it came as hard as ever, with another burst of lightning that kept everybody from going to sleep. Making a fire was out of the question, and the soldiers, including the officers, had to eat their rations cold.

"There is no fun in being a soldier in such weather as this," observed Gilbert, as he and Ben crouched under the shelter of a small overhanging rock. "It knocks the glory sky high."

"Well, we've got to take the fat with the lean, as the saying goes, Gilbert. War was never meant to be a parlor play."

"I wish our command would advance. I'm tired of lying around this vicinity."

"So am I. But I reckon General Kuroki won't advance until he gets support from the other armies in the field. He can't face the whole of General Kuropatkin's force alone."

Towards daybreak the storm began to subside, and by sunrise only a few scattering drops came

down, while the wind died out entirely. The soldiers scurried around to get the driest wood they could find, and lost no time in preparing a hot breakfast, which was more than welcomed by all.

"You may say what you please, but a soldier can't fight very well on an empty stomach," came from Ben, while drinking his coffee.

"Sometimes soldiers fight better that way, Ben," said Gilbert, with a faint smile. "We've done it, and more than once, too. But I didn't like it."

"What's the next move, I wonder?"

"I fancy we had best get back into the lines where we belong."

"I agree with you."

The Japanese officer consulted with them, and not long after this they were traveling along a trail which took them directly into camp.

As soon as word reached headquarters that a number of Russians were in that vicinity, a strong detachment was sent forth to round them up. This brought on a fierce engagement, in which half a dozen were killed or seriously wounded on either side.

The young Americans were glad to take a rest after their numerous adventures. The army moved forward from day to day, but, strange to say, the Russians kept their distance, falling back from one

point to another. The fighting was now largely in the neighborhood of Port Arthur and Dalny, and consequently the command that had crossed the Yalu so bravely had little to do.

Towards the middle of July the three Japanese armies were located in something like a great semi-circle a hundred and fifty miles in length, with General Kuroki on the right flank, General Oku on the left, and General Nodzu occupying the center. It was Oku who had done the most fighting around Port Arthur. Now his army was divided, a portion remaining behind to besiege the city, and the rest traveling northward, along the line of the railroad. General Nodzu had landed at Taku-Shan, some miles below the mouth of the Yalu, and so far had defeated the Russians at Siu-Yen, compelling them to fall back in the direction of the railroad and An-Ping.

"This looks to me as if the Russians were going to concentrate at either Hai-Cheng or at Liao-Yang, on the railroad," said Gilbert, when the news was brought in.

"More than likely it will be Liao-Yang," answered Ben. "I've been told that the Russians have been fortifying that town for a long while, and have great quantities of supplies stored there."

What Ben said about Liao-Yang was true. The

Russians were doing all in their power to make it a great stronghold, and had stored there immense amounts of supplies.

General Kuropatkin, the commander of the Russian army, now had at his command an army of about one hundred and thirty thousand men. The main portion was in the vicinity of Liao-Yang, with detachments as far south as Tashichiano, and as far north as Mukden, all along the all-important railroad.

Towards the end of July, Field Marshal Oyama, Commander-in-chief of all Japanese armies, arrived at Dalny, and at once took general charge of the operation of the war from the Japanese side. A general advance was ordered, both along the railroad and from the east and southeast, the object being not so much to drive General Kuropatkin back as to hem him in, and either annihilate his force, or compel his army to surrender.

The result of these movements brought our young Americans once more to the front. At one of the mountain passes they got into a fierce engagement lasting several hours. The losses to both the Russians and the Japanese were heavy, but luckily both Gilbert and Ben came out of the contest without serious injury.

Marching through the mountain passes in the hot

weather was little pleasure, and when it rained the roads were sometimes nothing but a mass of water and mud.

"Bedad, but this is soakin'," observed Dan Casey, who was now out of the hospital once more. A fine rain was falling and had been for several hours.

"How are you feeling, Dan?" questioned Gilbert, who was close by.

"Oh, I'm almost meself again, captain. But I had a close call. It was good of you to save me as ye did. I'll not be after forgettin' it."

"I was glad to be of service to you. I don't want to see any of my old friends go down and out in that fashion."

"It's an honor to you to say it. Many an officer would have passed me by," answered the Irish sharpshooter feelingly.

The sharpshooters were close to the command to which Gilbert and Ben belonged. Just ahead was some artillery, doing its best to get through the mud which seemed to stick to the wheels like so much paste.

"Orders to help the artillery out," said Gilbert presently, and one and another soldier took hold as best he could, some pushing and some hauling on long ropes. Gilbert and Ben were not above doing their

share, the former helping at a wheel and the latter shoving at the back of a cart. In the meantime Casey and Carl Stummer got to work too, with a log by which to pry the sunken wheels out of the deepest of the mud.

It was hard, exhausting labor, with little of glory in it, but nobody complained. The artillery had to get to a certain Chinese village that night, and take its position on some hills before daybreak.

"This is the seamy side of soldier life," said Ben, when there came a chance to talk.

"I dinks me it vos der muddy side, ain't it?" came from Stummer. "Py der poots! but I neffer saf vorser mud py der Philippines!" And this caused a short laugh.

The artillery was attacked by some Russians at eight o'clock on the following day. A battery opened on the Japanese, and then a body of Cossack cavalry swept close to the village and up the hillside. But the Japanese gunners were on the alert, and though one gun was captured it was quickly retaken. Then the Russians received a cutting cross-fire, which made them retreat for several miles.

The following day came another skirmish for the infantry, on a side road where the briers were unusually thick. This was difficult ground to fight upon, and when the contest came to an end many of



IT WAS HARD, EXHAUSTING LABOR, WITH LITTLE OF GLORY IN IT. — *Page 238.*

the soldiers found their trousers and leggings in tatters and their shoes full of holes.

"We'll certainly look like ragpickers if this keeps on," observed Ben that evening as he surveyed what was left of his uniform. "That was a thorny hill and no mistake."

"Now you can play needlewoman," cried Gilbert, with a smile. "Come, get to work."

"I'm too lazy and tired, Gilbert. It's so hot."

"Then hire one of the boys to do it for you. Some of them are really expert at sewing."

"A good idea," was the reply, and soon Ben had struck a bargain with a private to have all his clothing mended, and also to have his shirt washed. Then Gilbert closed a similar contract.

"Wish I could hear from Larry," said Ben, before turning in for the night. "I'd like to know where he is, and how the old *Columbia* is making out."

"Let us trust that she has escaped the Russian warships," answered Gilbert.

"Yes, I hope that with all my heart. The Russians wouldn't hesitate a minute to sink her with all her cargo, if they knew she was carrying Japanese war material."

CHAPTER XXVI

PRISONERS OF WAR

It is not my intention in these pages to describe all the numerous skirmishes and battles which took place between the time General Kuroki's army crossed the Yalu and when the tremendous assault was made upon the Russian army concentrated around Liao-Yang.

At times the enemy contested the way bitterly, while at others they fell back without making the least show of resistance. As a matter of fact they were too weak to engage in a regular battle, and their one idea in harassing the Japanese was to delay the forward movement of the Mikado's men, and thus give General Kuropatkin additional time in which to strengthen his position at Liao-Yang.

"This war is getting to be nothing but a series of skirmishes," said Gilbert one day, as he and Ben tramped along side by side.

"We'll get it hot and heavy before long, mark my words."

"Oh, I believe that myself. I wonder how far we are from the main body of the Russian army?"

"I heard somebody say that Liao-Yang wasn't more than fifty miles away."

"Then we are bound to strike something before long."

The next day a small body of the Japanese were ordered to advance along a side road, to see if any Russians were in that vicinity. With this body went some of the soldiers under Gilbert and Ben, and the Americans with them. The detachment was under the command of a Japanese major who also belonged to General Kuroki's staff. He was a fine fellow, and both Gilbert and Ben were soon on good terms with him.

A few Russians were seen on the march, but these fled before they could be captured or shot down.

"It is too bad we could not catch them," said the Japanese major to Gilbert. "They may cause us a great deal of trouble."

"You mean they may report to some other Russians?"

"Yes."

A little later another body of Russians were discovered up the side of a hill, in a big cornfield. At once the detachment gave chase.

It was hot work, all the more so because the ground in the cornfield was wet and slippery. In this running fight, which lasted half an hour, two

Russians were shot dead, and two Japanese privates were slightly wounded. Then the Russians slipped out of sight around a patch of timber and could not be located again.

"They are slippery customers," said Ben, after a hunt through the woods. "Where do you think they went to, Gilbert?"

"I give it up. Perhaps they ran hard and reached that next patch of timber before we got to this spot."

"Could they go that far?"

"Perhaps they could—if they were scared. When a man is badly frightened he can run like a deer, you must remember."

"Yes, that is true—I've done a little running myself at times."

The Japanese major held a consultation with the young Americans, and it was resolved that the best thing to do would be to get back to the main body of the army without delay.

"To follow those Russians might get us into serious trouble," said the Japanese officer. "There may be more of their posts near by."

The march was taken up a short while later and led out of the woods and back to the high cornfield. They were just entering into the cornfield when one of the soldiers in front set up a cry of warning.

"What is it, Gishuan?" questioned the Japanese officer.

"Russians, a regiment of them!" was the startling reply.

The report was correct, a whole regiment of Russian infantry was moving swiftly and silently across the cornfield. With them was a small detachment of Siberian cavalry, the Cossacks looking particularly fierce and warlike.

"We cannot give battle to such a number!" murmured the Japanese major. "Back, all of you, and hide!"

Gilbert and Ben saw the wisdom of this move, and turned to do as bidden, and so did the majority of the Japanese soldiers. But one soldier, with more enthusiasm than judgment, shouted a loud war cry and discharged his gun.

Instantly there was a commotion among the Russians, and some of the Cossacks came riding in the direction whence the report had come.

"The Japanese!" was the cry. "The dirty sons of Nippon! Charge upon them! Do not let them escape!"

There was intense excitement, and orders were quickly given to surround the Japanese if it could be done. Heedless of the brushwood the Cossacks dashed into the forest to get behind the enemy,

while the Russian infantry charged from the front.

The Japanese and Gilbert and Ben met the shock as bravely as possible. But with such an overwhelming force against them the battle could terminate in but one way. When nearly half of the Japanese company had been shot down the balance were called upon to surrender.

"You must give up!" roared a burly Russian officer. "If you do not, you will be shot down like so many dogs!"

Some of the Japanese soldiers replied to this speech by a volley from their guns, and as a consequence three more were killed. Seeing how hopeless was the fight the Japanese major made a signal of surrender, and Gilbert and Ben made similar signals. Then the soldiers threw down their arms.

"Ha, ha! a glorious capture!" roared one of the Cossacks, as the cavalymen pressed closer on their horses.

"Of what use to take prisoners?" came from a half-drunken trooper. "Let us finish them where they stand and move on."

All of the Cossacks had been indulging freely in *vodka*, a liquor much in use throughout Russia and Siberia, and they were consequently reckless to the last degree. Rushing in, three seized one of the

Japanese privates who was unarmed, and slashed him around the neck with their sabers until he fell lifeless.

It was a sickening sight and fairly made Gilbert's hair and Ben's stand on end. Never had they seen such a cold-blooded proceeding before.

"Do they intend to murder us?" faltered Ben. "If so, we had better fight to the finish!"

Another Japanese soldier was attacked, but he backed away and reached for his gun. It was loaded and in a twinkling he raised it and shot one of the Cossacks in the arm.

"Stop! In the name of the Holy Church I command ye to stop!" came in the midst of the uproar, and from behind the Russian infantry came the form of a priest, with long black gown, and with a crucifix in his hand.

At the sudden appearance of the priest the Cossacks paused and shrunk back. The priest was an elderly man, with white hair, but his eyes were clear and firm and his voice steady.

"Such slaughter as this is not war," he went on, in a loud voice. "They have surrendered, then make them prisoners."

"Holy Father Rostosef, you are right," came from the commander of the Russian foot soldiers. "We will make them prisoners, and they shall be

treated as such." He faced the Cossacks. "You have disgraced your uniform. Retire to our left flank."

The Cossacks fell back still further, and presently rode off, muttering among themselves. They did not dare disobey their superior, and they were afraid of the priest.

Some foot soldiers were then ordered up, and in less than quarter of an hour all of the prisoners had been searched and their weapons taken from them. They were then told to form in a column of twos, and were thus marched off, with the Russian infantry formed all around them. The wounded were left to take care of themselves, after having been given a few rations and some water.

"Well, this is a turn of affairs I don't like," whispered Gilbert to Ben, who was marching beside him.

"Looks as if we were booked for some Russian prison, doesn't it?"

"That's it, Ben,—or else some prisoners' camp, which may be just as bad."

"Never mind, let us be thankful those drunken Cossacks didn't have their way and murder us all."

"They are the toughest set of soldiers I have seen. They must be next door to these Chinese brigands they call Chunchuses."

"We've got that priest to thank for saving us. They are afraid of him if they aren't afraid of anybody else."

"Yes, the church has a strong hold on all Russian subjects."

At this point the Americans were ordered to keep silent, and as there was nothing to do but to obey, not another word was spoken for two hours.

At noon the regiment with its prisoners stopped at a Chinese village for a brief rest. During this time a Russian officer came to Gilbert and Ben and interviewed them.

"You are Americans, I am sure," said the officer.

"We are," answered Gilbert promptly. He saw no reason for evading the question.

"What prompted you to join the Japanese army?"

"The love of fighting, as much as anything."

At this the officer smiled grimly. "Have you been to war before?"

"Yes—in Cuba, in Luzon, and I was in the army that marched against Peking, in 1900."

"Ha, you surprise me! Then we have caught a real pair of fighters, eh? What service did you see during the march on Peking?"

As well as his limited command of the Russian language would permit, Gilbert told of his battles

on Chinese soil, to which the officer listened with keen interest. He was the hero of many a fight himself and not very old either.

"I was in China—in some of the very fights you mention," he said, when the young American had finished. "I remember the American command you speak of. Our troops met it while on the march to Tien-Tsin."

"You did!" cried Gilbert. "Then perhaps we fought almost side by side!"

"It is possible—and we had some Japanese fighting with us too." The Russian officer drew a long breath. "Times have changed, have they not?"

"Yes—especially for us," and Gilbert gave a short laugh.

"I am sorry—in a way. If I could do anything for you, I would. But I cannot," returned the Russian officer, and walked away.

CHAPTER XXVII

CAPTAIN BARUSKY HAS HIS SAY

CONTRARY to their expectations the prisoners, and especially the Americans, were treated well. The Russians did not have the best of rations, but what they did have they shared with all.

The march was kept up all of the afternoon, and it must be admitted that by nightfall both Ben and Gilbert were worn out. As usual, the Japanese did not appear to mind it in the least.

"I believe those fellows could march on for three days without stopping," was Gilbert's remark, as he threw himself on the ground to rest. "They are regular walking machines."

A small Chinese village had been reached, and here the prisoners were separated into four parties. The two young Americans were placed by themselves in a hut, in front of which two burly Russian soldiers were stationed on guard.

"I wonder what they will do with us next?" observed Ben, after a period of silence.

"Oh, I suppose we shall be taken to some Russian

prison, Ben,—unless we can find some way in which to escape.” Gilbert lowered his voice. “Do you think it can be done?”

“I don’t know. If we try it, we’ll run a first-rate risk of being shot down.”

“Do you want to see the inside of a Russian prison?”

“Not much! Some of them are little better than dungeons, so I’ve heard.”

“Then we want to watch our chances.”

An hour went by, and they were given their evening meal—some biscuits and some fruit which happened to be at hand.

“I’d like to see that Russian officer again,” said Gilbert. “I want to ask him if he knows Ivan Snokoff.”

“Probably not—but it will do no harm to question him,” returned Ben.

To Gilbert’s satisfaction the Russian officer came in a little later. He had a package of Russian cigarettes in his hand and asked them if they cared to smoke.

“Thank you, but I am not addicted to the weed,” said Gilbert, and Ben also declined the offer.

“I am glad you came in,” went on Gilbert. “I wished to ask you if you know a party by the name of Ivan Snokoff. He was at Port Arthur some time

ago, running a business which he called the Russian-American Importing and Exporting Company."

"Ivan Snokoff?" The officer reflected a minute. "I have heard the name Snokoff, but I do not recall such a person as you mention."

"He is a swindler, and swindled a company in which I am interested out of four thousand dollars."

"In that case he should be brought to justice."

"Do you know a Captain Barusky? He was stationed at Port Arthur at the time this war broke out."

Again the Russian officer mused for a moment.

"I think I do. To what command does he belong?"

"A regiment under Colonel Verga."

"Yes, then I know him, although not very well. Why do you ask about him?"

"He was mixed up in some of Ivan Snokoff's affairs. I think he advanced some money to Snokoff and then they divided their ill-gotten gains."

"That is a serious charge to make against an officer."

"But it is true."

"Do you know that Captain Barusky's regiment has been transferred to An-Ping?"

"No, I did not know it."

"We are bound for An-Ping."

"To the same place where Captain Barusky is located?"

"Exactly. You will probably have a chance to meet him face to face."

This was astonishing news, and for the moment Gilbert did not know what to say.

"I'm afraid you are piling up trouble for yourself, Gilbert," said Ben, in English. "We may be thrown into Captain Barusky's power."

"Yes, I understand," answered Gilbert.

"If you wish to make a charge against Captain Barusky, you will be likely to have an opportunity to do so," went on the Russian officer.

"I'll think it over," said Gilbert, and then the subject was changed to the campaign in China. The Russian officer was glad to talk about old times, and remained with the young Americans the best part of an hour.

"This is certainly news!" cried Gilbert, when he had departed.

"Gilbert, the more I think of it, the more I imagine you've put your foot in it."

"I certainly have—if Captain Barusky has anything to do with the prisoners."

"You can be sure that he will single you out for extra bad treatment—especially if he learns you have been talking about him."

“Well, I only told the truth.”

By morning it was raining once more, but despite the storm the march toward An-Ping was resumed. The route lay between the hills and mountains and across several fair-sized streams. They passed many Chinese villages, the inhabitants gazing at both Russians and prisoners with ill-concealed interest.

Three days later the outskirts of An-Ping were gained, and Gilbert and Ben were marched off to a small stone building which was doing duty as a temporary prison. Several apartments were filled with Japanese, but they were put in a small room by themselves. The room had a wooden bench, and in one corner was a heap of foul-smelling straw to be used for a bed.

“This is discouraging, to say the least,” remarked Ben, as he gazed around him. “I wonder how long they will keep us in this hole?”

Shortly after they arrived the Russian officer who had proved so friendly came to bid them good-by. It was the last they saw or heard of him.

On the following morning they got a taste of regular prison fare. They were given a bowl of mush which neither could touch.

“This is too strong for me,” declared Ben, after smelling the contents of his bowl.

Gilbert smiled grimly. "Just wait until you are good and hungry and maybe you'll be glad to tackle it."

"I don't see you eating very fast."

"No, I'm waiting for you to lead the way." And then both laughed. After all there is no truer saying than that "misery loves company."

Four days dragged along slowly. Occasionally they received something to eat which was fairly good, and then they devoured it to the last scrap, but the majority of the food was wretched in the extreme. But they had a good supply of pure water and for this, in such hot weather, they were thankful.

At the end of the fourth day came a surprise. Without warning a Russian captain stalked into the prison room and confronted Gilbert. It was Captain Barusky.

"Ha! ha! So we have you at last, my fine bird!" said he, gazing in a sinister manner at Gilbert. "It was a good capture truly!"

"What do you mean, Captain Barusky?"

"You know well enough what I mean." The Russian officer snapped his teeth together. "So you have been talking about me, eh?" he added, in a lower voice.

"I have said nothing that isn't true."

"So you are going to make more trouble for me, is that it?"

"I shall tell only the truth."

"Bah! Who will believe you?"

"Perhaps I'll be able to present proofs."

"Do you carry papers with you? I shall have you searched."

"I have no papers, so you need not trouble yourself."

The Russian captain clenched his hands, and took a turn around the apartment.

"I will not stand this!" he muttered. "You wish to ruin my reputation. Do you know what I am going to do? I shall denounce you to the authorities as a well-paid spy."

"I am no spy."

"Who will take your word against mine? I caught you spying at Port Arthur, and later, when the authorities tried to catch you, you fled."

"My friend is no spy," put in Ben. "He and I are merely officers in the Japanese army."

"You are both spies," snarled Captain Barusky.

"I shall bring overwhelming proofs of it."

"You have no such proofs," said Gilbert, his eyes flashing.

"You shall see."

"Perhaps you intend to manufacture the proofs," cried the young American.

For reply Captain Barusky shook his fist in Gilbert's face.

"Hold your tongue! I will show you what I can do!" And with these words he rushed from the prison room, slamming and bolting the heavy door behind him.

For the moment after he was gone neither Gilbert nor Ben spoke. Each looked questioningly at the other.

"Do you think he'll do as he says?" asked Gilbert, at length.

"I shouldn't wonder. He is as mad as a hornet."

"If they find us guilty as spies, they'll shoot us on the spot."

"That is true. But can they find us guilty?"

"They can if Captain Barusky cooks up the evidence. The Russian authorities will be only too glad to get rid of two prisoners. Dead men don't need rations."

"But they are bound to listen to our side of the story."

"Perhaps; but I don't believe in trusting them to do it."

"Well, what do you advise?"

"I don't know. Let us sit down and think it

over. One thing is certain, we are in a tight hole."

Both sat down on the bench and gave themselves up to thoughts which were far from pleasant. In his mind each could see himself standing up in front of a row of Russian soldiers, blindfolded, and shot down. It made them shiver to think of it.

"I vote we make a break for liberty," declared Ben presently. "We might as well be shot down that way as any other."

"All right, I'm with you,—if it can be done," answered Gilbert.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A RIDE FOR LIFE

It was easy to talk of breaking for liberty but not so easy to see how it could be done. The room in which they were confined was of stone, solidly built, and with one slit of a window, three feet high and not over six inches wide.

"We can't get through that window, that's certain," said Ben, after measuring the opening.

"Not until we are pretty well starved," grinned Gilbert.

"And the door is about as solid and as well bolted as one would wish."

"That's true, too. But I have a scheme, Ben—that is if you are in the humor to try something desperate."

"Well, I'm about in the humor to try anything. That last meal was worse than anything yet given to us."

"Yes, and we'll get worse still—if Captain Barusky has anything to do with it."

"What is your scheme?"

"You know the guard is changed about the time supper is brought in," whispered Gilbert. "Sometimes the guard doesn't come up right away—I mean the new man. The fellow who brings the supper is rather old and feeble. Why can't we overpower him and lock him in?"

"And run our chances of getting out of the building in the dark?"

"Exactly."

"It's mighty risky. There's a whole company of soldiers stationed in this vicinity."

"If you don't want to try it, say so."

"Do you want to run the risk, Gilbert?"

"Yes."

"Then I am with you. Shall we try it tonight?"

"Yes. Captain Barusky may have us hauled out in the morning."

From this point they began to lay their plans with care. Gilbert was to keep in a corner, behind the door, while Ben was to lure the soldier bringing their supper into the center of the apartment. Then Gilbert was to leap on the man from behind, and close his mouth, while Ben shut the door, so that no noise might reach the other parts of the building.

Nature favored them in their undertaking. In the middle of the afternoon it began to darken down,

and by supper time a heavy storm was in progress, with considerable thunder and lightning.

"I am glad of this," said Gilbert, as the rattle of thunder ceased for a moment. "The more noise there is, the better for us."

Both were a trifle nervous as the time approached for the soldier with supper to appear. They realized that they were taking their lives in their hands. A brace of bullets might end all for them.

Presently they heard the bolt shot back, and on the instant Gilbert leaped behind the opening door. The Russian soldier came in with two bowls of black coffee and half a loaf of stale bread.

"Look here, somebody is up to something at the window," cried Ben, pointing to the opening through which the rain was driving.

"Who is there, the guard?" questioned the Russian soldier and stalked in that direction.

This was Gilbert's opportunity and like a flash he leaped behind the man, clasped him around the chest with one arm, and placed a hand over the fellow's mouth. As he did this, Ben leaped for the door and shut it softly.

The Russian soldier struggled and did his best to cry out. But he was no match for the two young Americans, who did not handle him with as much care as he might have received had the case been less

desperate. He received a stinging blow in the ear, and another on the chin, and sank like a log to the floor unconscious.

"Now or never!" cried Gilbert. "Wait till I see if the coast is clear."

He opened the door a few inches and peered forth. Only one guard was in sight, and in a moment this fellow had disappeared around an angle of the passageway.

"Come on!" whispered Gilbert hoarsely.

"Wait—I want this pistol," answered Ben, and in a trice he had the weapon from the unconscious soldier and also his box of cartridges. Then he ran after his chum, who was already outside of the room, and bolted the door in the usual fashion.

They had made up their mind which way to turn, and now ran at their best speed to where a flight of stone steps led to a small stone court. The door to the court was open, so that some fresh air might enter the prison hallway. Outside all was dark, wet, and apparently deserted.

But they knew some guards must be at hand, and they crawled along close to some empty boxes and barrels with which the courtyard was littered.

"Bring a box along," whispered Gilbert, picking up one himself, and Ben understood and did as requested.

A few minutes more and a flash of lightning showed them where the end of the courtyard was. This also revealed to them a guard, standing in the shelter of the wall, trying to keep out of the driving rain. The guard's back was toward them, so he did not see the young Americans.

"Here's as good a spot as any," whispered Gilbert presently, and placed his box close to the wall. Ben put the second box on top and both climbed up. Then over the wall they went, and darted down a lane which another flash of lightning revealed.

So far no alarm had come from the prison, showing that the attack on the man with supper had not yet been discovered. It continued to rain furiously, wetting them to the skin. But they only prayed that the downpour might continue.

"Where are we getting to now, Gilbert?" questioned Ben, after they had covered the best part of a mile.

"We're coming to the outskirts of the town, I reckon. The houses if you'll notice, are further apart."

"Keep your eyes open then, for the Russians may have a picket guard out."

"No doubt they have, and I am watching as hard as I can."

Presently another flash of lightning showed them

a small barn, and two horses inside, saddled and ready for use.

"Wait!" cried Ben, clutching his chum by the arm. "Wait! I have an idea."

He led the way into the barn. Nobody was present, and he felt the animals, to find them thoroughly dry.

"They have not been out and they must, therefore, be fresh," said he. "Shall we take them? We can go a good many miles on them before day-break."

"Yes, we'll take them, Ben. And see, there are some military cloaks on yonder pegs. Let us take two of them also."

"And spurs, Gilbert! And a saber. We are truly in luck—if we can get away undiscovered!"

In feverish haste each threw a military cloak around his shoulders, put on a pair of spurs, and Gilbert buckled on the saber. Then they untied the horses, led them outside, and mounted.

"And now to ride for our very lives!" cried Gilbert, and led the way down a road which the lightning revealed to them. They put spurs to their steeds, and in a short while An-Ping was left far behind.

"We are not yet out of the woods," said Ben. "If the picket guard catches us, we are lost."

"I shall fight to the last, Ben!"

"Well, I'll fight, too,—if they give us a chance."

No more was said. The rain was now letting up a little, and the lightning was dying away to the southward. They were riding toward the southeast, for they imagined that in that direction lay the Japanese camp, although how far off there was no telling.

Half an hour later came an alarm. Out of the darkness leaped a Russian guard, with a bayonet fixed to his gun.

"Halt!" he shouted. "What is the countersign?"

"Moscow!" yelled Gilbert, on a venture. "Stand aside, fellow! We carry important dispatches," and he crowded forward.

"But the countersign," stammered the Russian soldier. "They said it was Mukden."

"Exactly—just what I said," went on Gilbert hurriedly. "Stand aside," and he continued to crowd forward. The next moment he and Ben were past, on a gallop, the guard staring after them blankly.

"Well, of all the bunco games!" murmured Ben, when the alarm was over. "He's a fine guard, isn't he?"

"A fine guard—for us, Ben. I hope he doesn't

wake up and fire a shot after us—or tell his superiors.”

No shot came, and soon they felt that they were well outside of the Russian lines. On a distant hillside they saw a row of camp-fires burning and were cautious to give them a wide berth.

All through the wet night they rode at the best speed the horses could command. Both were good steeds,—evidently belonging to officers of the Siberian cavalry, by the trappings displayed. The cloaks were also those of cavalry officers, so both looked as if they belonged to the Russian army.

“Now we have got to look out that some Japanese guard doesn’t shoot us down!” cried Ben, on the way.

“We’re a long way from any Japanese camp, I’m thinking,” was the answer.

At daybreak they came to an isolated Chinese farmhouse. A careful investigation showed that nobody was around but two farm-hands well advanced in years.

“We want some breakfast, and at once,” said Gilbert, to one of the hands. “Give us the best the place affords.”

The farm-hand was scared, and speedily succeeded in finding a young chicken and boiling it for them. To this were added some rice cakes and some fruit,

and also a pot of tea, and it is needless to say that the young Americans ate heartily.

“Let us take turns at resting,” said Gilbert. “I wouldn’t trust these Chinese.” And so it was arranged, Ben sleeping two hours and then Gilbert doing likewise. After that they ate a light dinner and rode off once more. The horses had been fed, and the rest put them in fairly good condition to continue the journey.

CHAPTER XXIX

GILBERT PLAYS THE SPY

THE rain had cleared away and before long the sun shone brightly. As it was warm, the two young Americans discarded the cloaks they had taken. Gilbert now held the pistol Ben had taken from the soldier at the prison, while his chum carried the saber found on the stable wall.

"We are not very heavily armed," was Gilbert's comment. "But I reckon we could give a guard or two a pretty stiff fight."

"I move we steer clear of all Russians,—if we can," returned Ben.

"Oh, I agree on that. I'm talking about if we are discovered."

"Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad scheme to hide in the woods somewhere and rest until it gets dark again. We are surely on dangerous territory."

"That's a good idea—unless we can make certain there are no Russians around."

Three miles were covered, and they were on the

point of making a sharp turn across a small stream when Gilbert called a sudden halt.

"Into the bushes with you, Ben!" he cried, and turned into a thicket backed up by some trees. His chum followed, and they lost no time in reaching a spot where they were well screened.

They had scarcely done this when they heard a tramping on the road and a battery belonging to the Russians hove into view. Each gun and each ammunition cart was drawn by four horses, the drivers whipping the animals unmercifully to make them keep on the move.

"A stream, and no bridge!" the young Americans heard somebody roar in deep anger. "How in the name of the Czar are we to get across here?"

"Are there no rocks?" asked another voice.

"No, 'tis mud, and it will be hub-deep if we try to get over."

"Then that staff officer told us to take the wrong road. Maledictions upon his empty head! What is to be done? We must reach Nan-shen-go Hill by to-night. Those dirty sons of Nippon are hot after us!"

There was a confusing murmur of voices, which ceased as a much louder voice was heard.

"Why are you standing here, wasting your time and breath? Out with your axes and cut down

some of yonder trees and throw them in the stream. Must we waste all day here?" And a volley of curses followed, in the midst of which several artillerymen got out the axes referred to, and started for the nearest of the trees.

It was the very thicket in which Gilbert and Ben were in hiding, and for the moment both thought they would be discovered. Then Gilbert slipped to the ground.

"Come, lead your horse further back," he whispered to Ben. "Make as little noise as possible."

His advice was followed, and soon they found themselves at a spot where further retreat, owing to the softness of the soil, was impossible.

"Do you think they'll come as far as this?" questioned Ben.

"Hardly—it would be too far to drag the logs. They'll cut down only what is handy. But, Ben?"

"Well?"

"I am going to crawl forward and listen to what they have to say. Perhaps I'll hear of something to our advantage."

"Shall I go along?"

"No, you look after the horses."

So it was arranged, and with the caution of an Indian on the war trail, Gilbert crept forward through the underbrush to a point where he could

see and hear the greater part of what was going on. Several small trees had already been cut down and the artillerymen were casting branches and trunks into the stream, so that they might bring their guns and carts over in safety.

"Not much of a bridge, but safer for us than will be the bridge at Shan-gow for the Japanese," chuckled one of the Russians while working.

"What about the bridge at Shan-gow?" asked another, who had just come up.

"Oh, it was mended to suit our engineers, that is all," answered the first speaker, and chuckled louder than ever.

"Did they set a trap for the dirty sons of Nippon?"

"That they did," put in a third speaker. "A fine trap, too."

"Tell me what it was, Groski."

"So you may tell the enemy, eh?"

"Do you take me for a traitor?"

"No, I was but fooling. They placed some dynamite under the bridge and connected it in some way with the planking. As soon as a heavy weight like a gun or a body of soldiers gets on the bridge something will go off, and the gun or the soldiers will go up, sky-high!" And the speaker laughed loudly, his companions joining in.

"Dynamite does not blow up, it blows down," said one, after the laughter had come to an end.

"True for you, Shelapovsky; but there was powder there as well as dynamite. You can trust our engineers to fix a trap properly."

"They left a big hole on the An-Ping road," put in another of the artillerymen. "It was on this side of the river. It was covered with loose hay and had pointed sticks at the bottom. I trust the enemy's artillery or soldiers get into that. They'll have a fine tumble!" And then the Russians laughed again.

"Stop your talking and laughing!" shouted a voice of authority. "Must we stay here all day? Lazybones, get to work, or I'll have you knouted!" And then the task of building a temporary bridge was hurried along in silence. Soon the artillery was again on the move and had passed out of sight and hearing.

Losing no time, Gilbert hurried back to where he had left Ben and the horses.

"Come on, the coast is clear, and we have no time to lose," said he.

"Did you hear anything of importance?"

"I certainly did, Ben," and the young captain related the particulars.

"We must report this—if we've got time to do

it," exclaimed Ben. "Where is this Shan-gow bridge?"

"I haven't any idea, excepting that it must be between us and General Kuroki's army."

"I've heard of such things before. Don't you remember the holes the Tagals in Luzon used to dig?"

"To be sure I do. But they never blew up a bridge with our artillery or soldiers on it."

"If they did, I don't remember it. Yes, you are right, we must get back to camp at once and report this."

"If it isn't too late," was the grim response.

Once again they moved along the road, leaving the woods behind, and coming out to where there were long patches of high corn—destined soon to be trampled under foot by the march of countless Japanese soldiers. In some spots the corn was so high that it was impossible to see over it, even when on horseback.

They passed several farmhouses, but the buildings appeared to be deserted. Once a Chinaman peered at them from behind a corn-crib, but as soon as he was discovered the Celestial lost no time in disappearing.

"They seem to be scared to death," was Ben's comment. "I suppose they think they are caught

between two fires, with the Japanese on one side and the Russians on the other."

"And they are, Ben. By this war some of them will lose all they possess, and it is a question as to who will pay them back after the conflict ceases."

At the end of another mile the cornfields were left behind, and they struck into a wooded road leading more to the southward. A short distance beyond was a cross-road, and here they paused for a minute to "get their bearings," as Gilbert expressed it.

"My gracious, look there!" cried Ben suddenly, and pointed down the cross-road. A dozen men on horseback had appeared, riding toward them at a rapid gait. "Are those Japanese cavalry?"

"I don't think they are," answered Gilbert, after a brief glance at the riders, who were all heavily armed. "They look to me more like Chinese."

"Chinese? And armed like that? Gilbert, if that is true, they must be Chunchuses!"

"If they are, we had better get out and be quick about it," was the answer.

"Right you are."

Away they went along the main road. But though they started off thus rapidly they were too late to escape observation, and a second later a fierce cry rent the air, and they were called upon, in Chinese, to halt.

"They are Chunchuses!" muttered Gilbert. "Now, Ben, we must ride if we never rode before! If those barbarians catch us, I don't know what they won't do to us!"

"Torture us to death, more than likely!"

This was no idle speech upon Ben's part. He had heard all about the Chunchuses, who are nothing more or less than Chinese bandits or brigands. Large bodies of Chunchuses roam through Manchuria and other parts of China, holding up people wherever they can, and stealing all they can get within their grasp. Some of the more savage of them delight in torturing their victims, in the hope of learning where money or other valuables have been hidden. The war had made some of them particularly bold, and on more than one occasion Russian detachments had been sent out to shoot them down without mercy wherever found.

The road ahead of the two young Americans had several turns, so they hoped to be able to throw the Chunchuses off the track should a side path appear while their pursuers were out of sight. They spurred their horses on at top speed, and the animals responded as best they could, considering the limited rest they had had after their night's travel.

"I'm afraid we are not gaining much," said Gilbert, as they heard the shouts of the Chinese bandits

behind them. "Their horses must be fresh;" which was a fact.

Soon came a more open patch of the road, and here the young Americans tried to increase their speed. But this was impossible, and gradually the Chunchuses drew closer.

"Stop, or we'll fire on you!" sang out the leader of the bandits, and then a bullet whizzed between Gilbert and Ben.

"This is getting hot," muttered Gilbert. "If they—hullo!"

He broke off short, and with good reason. Directly ahead was another turn of the road. Here more Chunchuses had put in an appearance. The young Americans were hemmed in, and escape was entirely cut off.

CHAPTER XXX

CAPTURED BY THE CHUNCHUSES

"What shall we do now, Gilbert?"

"I don't know that we can do anything," responded the young captain dismally. "We are caught, that is all there is to it."

"Shall we show fight?"

"What is the use—they are fifteen or eighteen to two."

"And as villainous a looking crowd as I ever beheld. We are in a pickle truly."

"We may as well put on a bold front. When they find we haven't anything of value with us, they may let us go."

It was a forlorn hope, and they had no time to give it further consideration. They brought their horses down to a walk and the tired steeds were glad of the change in gait. The bandits ahead had halted to learn the condition of affairs. Now they saw those behind Gilbert and Ben and set up a shout.

"They all belong to one gang, that is sure," observed Ben.



THE CHUNCHUSES SURROUNDED THE AMERICANS AND COMPELLED THEM TO HALT. — Page 277.

"Let us keep on," was the answer.

There was a clatter of hoofs, and amid shouts and yells the Chunchuses surrounded the Americans and compelled them to halt.

"Throw down your weapons," said one, who was the leader, and as there was no help for it, they did as bidden. Then the leader asked them who they were and where they had come from.

"We are Americans and attached to the Japanese army," answered Gilbert stiffly. "What do you want of us?"

"All you possess," was the ready return.

"You can have that and welcome, since we have nothing with us."

At this the brigands scowled and muttered among themselves.

"Search them," was the reply. "Do it well, too. These Americans are sly cats for hiding things."

Both Gilbert and Ben were made to dismount, and were searched with great thoroughness. But as all of their possessions had been taken from them by the Russians at the prison, nothing of value was brought to light. At this the Chunchuses grumbled loudly, and pushed the young officers roughly.

"Perhaps they threw their goods into the thickets as they rode along," suggested one of the bandits. "If so, make them confess where."

"Yes! yes!" came in a roar. "Make them confess! They must have carried something of value."

"You must tell us where you have put your valuables," said one of the bandits, and caught Gilbert by the throat, while another held Ben.

"I had nothing but what you saw," gasped Gilbert. "Le—let me go."

"We will not believe that. Confess!" And now several of the Chunchuses drew their swords and made movements as if to run the prisoners through.

"I have nothing, I tell you," came from Ben. "What are you going to do—murder us in cold blood?"

"And why not? We care nothing for Americans," returned one of the bandits with a sneer.

"We have not forgotten the attack on Peking," added another.

"But I——" began Gilbert, when a yell came from one of the Chunchuses in the rear of the crowd.

"What is it, Hing Chang?"

"The Japanese sharpshooters! The same we met last night!"

The report was correct—some Japanese soldiers were rushing along the road with guns ready to fire. In a second more a volley of shots rang out, and three of the Chinese bandits fell to the earth, two dead and the third badly wounded.

"*Banzai!*" was the Japanese cry. "Here they are—the rascals who stole the things from our camp. At them, men! Let not one of them escape!"

"The sharpshooters! We must ride!" muttered the Chunchuses. "They are too many for us!" And letting Gilbert and Ben go, they leaped for their horses with all speed.

The Japanese detachment continued to fire on them, and they sent back two volleys in return. Then they went clattering up the road as fast as their horses could carry them.

The turn of affairs was bewildering, and the Americans scarcely knew what to do. Then Gilbert, who happened to possess a white handkerchief, which neither Russians nor Chunchuses had cared to take from him, hoisted it in the air as a flag of truce.

"*Banzai!*" he roared, and Ben joined in the cry, to show the Japanese that they belonged to the army and not to the bandits.

It was well they raised the handkerchief, for it probably saved them from death. Even as it was, several sharpshooters fired on them, but luckily the shots did no further harm than to clip their clothing.

"Vell, of dis ton't peat der pand!" shouted a German voice. "Cabtain Russell und Cabtain Bennington, or I vos dreamin'!" and the next instant

Carl Stummer came forward from among the sharpshooters.

"Stummer!" gasped Ben, and was never so glad to see a friend as at that moment. "And Casey, too!"

"Say, but you're after havin' a close shave wid a mighty sharp razor," came from Dan Casey. "Was it thim bandits as collared ye lasht week? Sure an' I thought it was the Roossians."

"We were captured by the Russians, Dan," answered Gilbert. "But we escaped, only to fall in with those Chunchuses. I'm mightily glad you came up."

By this time the brief fight with the bandits had come to an end, with another killed and two more wounded. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that the wounded Chunchuses were at once beheaded by the Japanese—a common way of treating all bandits in the Orient.

As soon as the excitement was over, a Japanese officer in charge of the detachment listened to the story Gilbert and Ben had to tell. That section of the country was strange to him, and he did not know where the Shan-gow bridge was located.

"About that hole in the An-Ping road there is no use of worrying," said he. "We have already located a number of such holes, and our advance

guard are watching for them. But I think you had best report this bridge affair at headquarters without delay. You have horses, so can make faster time than we can."

"Are there any Russians between here and the camp?" asked Ben.

"I believe not. They are retreating to An-Ping and Liao-Yang as fast as they can travel. General Kuroki and General Nodzu are pressing them hard."

After some talk Gilbert persuaded the Japanese officer to allow Stummer and Casey to return to camp with them—the sharpshooters to show them the proper road to take, there being several a short distance back.

"Sure, an' this is a touch of old times," said Dan Casey, as the four moved off. "I'm after wishing we were all in one company."

"Oxactly mine vish, too," said Carl Stummer. "Put ve ton't got eferyding in dis world vot ve like," and he heaved a ponderous sigh.

As they moved along they passed several spots where the Russian outposts had had their camps, and one place where a battery had been located—probably the battery Gilbert and Ben had met on the road. But nobody was around—Russian, Chinese, or Japanese.

"It will take years for this country to recover

from the war," remarked Ben. "It seems a shame that such things have to be."

"Sure an' man's a wild animal whin ye sthrip th' skin of civilization from him," came from Casey.

The Irish sharpshooter expected to reach camp by seven or eight o'clock in the evening, but when he came to a spot where two roads presented themselves, he paused, and scratched his head.

"Carl, which is the right road, do ye think?" he asked, presently.

"Yah, dot is a riddle alretty! Maybe dot von on der left," answered the German.

"An' I was after thinkin' it was the wan on the right."

"Aren't you sure, Dan?" questioned Gilbert.

"I confess I am not. I wasn't watchin' the road very closely whin we came over the bit av a hill yonder."

After a brief consultation they decided to try the road on the right for a mile or more. "If it runs to the southeast, that is all we want," said Gilbert.

It was a broad highway and unusually well kept. As they advanced Dan Casey shook his head.

"Sure an' I don't think we had such good walkin' as this, did we, Carl?"

"Not much ve didn't," declared the German sharpshooter. "Der mud vos awful in sphots."

"Perhaps we had better go back," suggested Gilbert.

"Let us keep to the road a while longer," said Ben.
"It seems to run in the direction we want to go."

There was a turn ahead, leading into a small valley. At the turn they came to where they could see a fair-sized stream of water ahead.

"Here is a hut," said Ben, and pointed it out. In front of the shelter sat an old Chinese woman, blinking uncertainly at them.

"Sure an' that ould woman ought to be able to tell us about the road," said Casey.

"I'll question her," replied Gilbert.

But to get any information out of the old woman was not so easy. She was very deaf, and much scared, and held up her hands as if supplicating them not to kill her.

"We will not harm you," shouted Gilbert into her ear.

"I am poor!" she replied. "Poor! poor! poor!"

"Tell me what road this is," he fairly bawled.

"I am poor and old! Do not slay me, kind sirs!"

"What road is this?" he shouted. "What road?" And he pointed up and down the highway.

"The road? It is the road to An-Ping and Liao-Yang."

"And where does it lead to in the other direction?"

"To the village of Shan-gow, just across the bridge."

"Shan-gow!" cried the young captain. "Is that the Shan-gow bridge?"

"It is! Oh, spare my life!"

"Were the Russians at that bridge a day or two ago?"

"Yes! yes! But what they did I do not know. They said, if I went down there, I would be killed."

Gilbert turned to his companions.

"That is the Shan-gow bridge—the one the Russians mined," he said, in English. "We have reached it in time, after all."

"Yes, but none too soon!" came from Ben.

"What do you mean, Ben?"

"Look along yonder road. A battery of Japanese guns is coming at full speed, and they are bound for the bridge!"

CHAPTER XXXI

THE GREAT BATTLE OF LIAO-YANG

WHAT Ben said was true. A battery of six guns was moving swiftly along the road which led to the bridge of the stream before them. The battery was so close that they could plainly hear the shouts of the drivers, as they urged their horses along the highway in the direction of the fatal spot.

"Come, there is no time to lose here!" shouted Gilbert, and put spurs to his horse. Ben followed, and away they went side by side to the very end of the bridge.

Would it be safe to cross this structure? Each asked himself that question, and then turned an anxious look upon his companion.

"Better not try it," said Ben.

"Let us ford the river—if we can," returned Gilbert, and turned his horse from the bridge to a trail that led to the water's edge.

Usually the stream was of small importance, but the recent rains had greatly swollen the rush of water. In they dashed and went down, first to their

steeds' knees and then to their bodies. The horses were used to this sort of thing, however, and did not hesitate or lose their footing.

The battery was thundering along not over two hundred feet from the end of the bridge, when Gilbert and Ben confronted the foremost driver.

"Back! back!" shouted both, in their loudest tones, and Gilbert added, as the driver still kept on: "Back! for your life!"

He swung around, and reaching down, caught one of the leading battery horses by the head. He continued to shout, and just before the bridge was reached the leading gun was halted, and the others also came to a standstill.

"What does this mean?" demanded the captain of artillery, as he dashed up on horseback.

"Don't go on the bridge," answered Gilbert, saluting, while Ben did the same.

"Why not?"

"I have every reason to believe that the Russians have placed a mine under it."

At these words there was much astonishment, and Gilbert and Ben had to tell all they knew. Mined bridges are not new, and before long an examination of the structure was made, and some dynamite and powder located, along with an electric battery

and wire, set to explode the mine the moment an extra heavy weight should pass onto the bridge.

"Captain, you have done us a great service," said the commander of the artillery to Gilbert. "I shall not forget this and shall report it to the general." But the report was never sent in, for the reason that two days later the captain of artillery was killed, along with nearly half of the men composing his battery.

From the captain Gilbert and Ben learned where to find the command to which they belonged. In the meantime, Casey and Stummer joined the others—walking over the bridge when it was safe to do so—and the four went forward as before.

"Dot vos a great ding to do—safe dot pattery," remarked Stummer. "Dot vos a fedder mit your cab in, cabtain."

"Oh, I did no more than my duty," said Gilbert modestly. And then he insisted upon changing the subject.

When the camp was gained late that evening many were astonished to hear what both Gilbert and Ben had to tell. They reported in full, and told of the movements of the enemy so far as they knew them.

"It was a daring thing to escape from that prison," said one of their superior officers. "Had

they caught sight of you, they would surely have shot you down."

"We knew the risk we were running," answered Ben. "We don't want another such experience."

In the camp they found a number of letters awaiting them. Ben had two from home—one from his brother Walter, and one from his Uncle Job Dowling. Both said that matters were running smoothly, and that Walter was doing remarkably well in his new business. They were surprised that Ben had gone into the army with Gilbert, but wished him well. They added that so far they had not heard from Larry since he had left Nagasaki on the *Columbia*.

Gilbert's principal letter was from the Richmond Importing Company. In this he was complimented on having made such a good bargain with the Japanese authorities for the *Columbia's* cargo, and for having sent the schooner to Manila for another cargo. He was also advised to keep his eyes open for Ivan Snokoff, and bring that rascal to justice if it could possibly be done.

"As if I hadn't done my best to run him down," said Gilbert, after reading the letter to his chum.

"I suppose they do not realize the difficulties in the way," answered Ben. "But, somehow, I feel

it in my bones that you'll run across Snokoff some day, and before this war is over, too."

"It doesn't seem possible, Ben. He'll be sure to keep away from any Japanese advance."

Both Gilbert and Ben were glad to rest for several days after returning to camp. The men of their companies were delighted to have them back, and each insisted upon coming up and shaking hands.

During those days of idleness Gilbert was surprised one day to receive a visit from Jiru Siko.

"Come to war las' week," explained the little brown man. "All wife an' children in Nagasaki now. Going to fight Russians all time, show 'em what Jiru Siko can do—not afraid of them, no!"

"Good for you, Siko!" laughed Gilbert. "I hope you come out of the campaign a general." Then he asked about the *O-Taka* and her captain, and learned that the vessel was now being used to transport soldiers and stores along the Korean coast.

The advance of General Kuroki's army in the direction of Liao-Yang began August 23. There was a smart skirmish with a small body of Russians who immediately fell back towards An-Ping. After this Field Marshal Oyama ordered a general advance of the three Japanese armies, and it was this advance which brought on the great chain of fights lasting ten days, which are now known as the battle of

Liao-Yang—a bloody struggle which has few parallels in history. In this contest over four hundred thousand men were engaged, the battlefield extending over a distance of seventy-five miles, and the killed and wounded numbered fully thirty thousand.

As said before, the Japanese commander not only wished to confront General Kuropatkin in battle, but he wished also to get behind the Russian general and cut him off from a possible retreat northward along the line of the railroad. For this reason, while General Oku and General Nodzu hammered at the Russian front, General Kuroki struck the Russian line in the far east, and did his best to turn the enemy's flank.

Liao-Yang is on the Tai-tse River, which flows almost east and west. In order to get around the Russian flank it was necessary for General Kuroki to cross the river, as well as cross several smaller streams. All of the hills in that vicinity were in the possession of the Russians, and were protected by batteries. There was a strong Russian detachment at An-Ping, and another at Liandian-sian.

General Kuroki's army advanced in three columns, through the valley of the Lan, a small stream flowing into the Tai-tse, and here it was that a hot

fight was experienced, in which both Japanese and Russians showed uncommon bravery. The Japanese general wished to separate the two Russian fighting forces, but his plan was only partly successful, and before the third day's fighting in that vicinity, General Kuropatkin became alarmed at the possibility of having his flank turned, and ordered his troops to fall back, which they did, leaving An-Ping and numerous other places of advantage in the hands of the Japanese.

The first shock of this great battle was felt by Gilbert and Ben the second day after the general advance was begun. The battalion was ordered to help drive a Russian battery from its position on a small hill, and away went the Japanese soldiers on the double-quick, with fixed bayonets. "*Banzai! banzai!*" was the cry, and the charge was delivered with tremendous fierceness. The Russians answered by pouring in a deadly fire which killed fully a quarter of the companies. But the Japanese did not waver, and went forward once more with louder shouts than ever.

"This is war, if ever there was such a thing!" panted Ben, as he came up beside Gilbert, after the fighting had continued the best part of half an hour. He was dripping from perspiration and so out of breath he could scarcely speak.

"Both sides seem to know how to fight," was Gilbert's reply.

"What is the matter with your left hand?"

"I got stuck with a bayonet. But it doesn't amount to much."

"Do you think the Russians will retreat?"

"We are ordered to charge until they do, Ben. There is no retreat for our side," answered the acting major of the battalion.

Again came the shock of battle, and once more a great number of men were mowed down. But now the Russians broke and started to run. Then the battery tried to get away. One gun was overcharged and blown to pieces, and another overturned by the Japanese, while the remainder made good their escape. On the field lay three of the gunners who had died at their post of duty.

When night fell the Japanese had gained an important position to the east of Liao-Yang, and the Russians had been driven back all along the line. As tired as the soldiers were they were forced to fortify the positions they had gained, and the artillery was brought up, so as to be in readiness by daybreak.

It was not yet six o'clock when the contest was renewed, but this was to the south and southwest. For the command under Gilbert there was nothing to do but to march down to the river. Here a cross-

ing was effected during the afternoon. The Russians offered a slight show of resistance, and called additional troops to the front during the night.

The next day the battle broke forth with renewed fury. The batteries on both sides did their utmost to silence each other, while the great plain in front of Liao-Yang, many miles in extent, was filled with the armies of the Czar and the Mikado, fighting with a desperation and valor that could not be excelled. At first the fighting of the infantry was at a distance, but soon the armies drew closer and closer to each other, and then came the shock of steel against steel, while the batteries poured in their awful fire from all sides. It was a perfect inferno, and before night fell the plain was strewn with thousands upon thousands of dead and wounded.

"This cannot be kept up—it is beyond human endurance," said more than one soldier and officer that night, when trying to catch a little rest. But at dawn the contest was renewed, and tired as they were the soldiers upon both sides went at it as bravely as before. But the Russians could not hold their defenses, and, alarmed by the movement to cut him off from a possible retreat northward, General Kuropatkin fell back, and the next day ordered his army to evacuate Liao-Yang.

CHAPTER XXXII

FACE TO FACE—CONCLUSION

THE report that Liao-Yang was being abandoned by the Russians spread with lightning-like rapidity through the Japanese army, and many were the cries of *Banzai* which rent the air. Although wearied to the last degree many of the soldiers were for pressing forward, and clinching the victory gained, and the onward movement was begun just as quickly as necessary supplies could be brought to the front.

When Liao-Yang was entered by the Japanese it presented a truly terrible spectacle. The Russian portion of the town was in ruins, and a large part of the Chinese quarters had been sacked, the shops broken open, and contents strewn everywhere. Many buildings were burning, and a heavy smoke hung over all. The Japanese shell fire had caused heavy destruction at certain points, and many Chinese and Russian dead were found in the houses and on the streets.

General Kuroki was still of a mind to turn the Russian flank, if it could possibly be done, and for

that purpose a large portion of his army struck northward, in columns almost parallel to the columns of the enemy. On several occasions the opposing columns came into touch with each other, and some lively skirmishes were the result.

"He's going to try to hem in the Russians before they reach Mukden," said Gilbert. "If he is able to do that, we may see worse fighting than we've seen yet."

"It can't be worse than it was in the plain before Liao-Yang," replied Ben. "I never saw such a horrible sight in my life. It was enough to give one the nightmare."

The command under Gilbert had been detached from General Kuroki's army and was now placed on guard in the vicinity of Liao-Yang. Such a guard was absolutely necessary, for the purpose of maintaining order and to guard private property from the depredations of the Chunchuses, and ordinary plunderers.

Gilbert's first visit to the town was paid two days after the worst of the fighting came to an end. He was accompanied by Ben and a small detachment of soldiers, who were to guard the property of certain foreigners who had asked for protection.

The great majority of the Russians had left Liao-Yang, but here and there one was discovered dis-

guised as a Chinaman, or else claiming to be a German or some other foreigner. Those who had not been soldiers or spies, and those who behaved themselves, were not molested, but all others were promptly placed under arrest.

"The town must have been a hot place while the fighting was going on," was Ben's comment, as he and his chum surveyed the scene before them. "Just look how the shells ripped up that building yonder, and how they riddled the house on the corner."

"You are right, Ben. And yet this can't be a patch to the bombardment at Port Arthur. They have had to endure it for weeks and weeks. It must be simply awful."

"Do you think Port Arthur will fall?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Stoessel can't hold out forever, no matter how brave he and his garrison are. Sooner or later their ammunition and food will run out."

As the pair walked along one of the streets they passed a man in Chinese dress whose face looked strangely familiar to Gilbert. The man stared at Gilbert as if he had seen a ghost.

"That's queer," murmured the young captain, and stopped short.

"What's up?" demanded Ben.

“That fellow—I’ve seen him before. I think—Ah, I have it! Wait a minute!”

Gilbert wheeled around and made after the man, and caught him by the shoulder.

“Wait a minute,” said he, in Russian. “Don’t you remember me?”

“Remember you?” stammered the man. “I—I——”

“I am Gilbert Pennington, of the Richmond Importing Company. You are Nicholas Vanskynov, the clerk who used to work for Ivan Snokoff.”

“Oh!” The clerk drew a long breath and grew pale. “Do not—do not expose me, sire!” he pleaded. “The Japanese—they will kill me!”

“What are you doing here?”

“I was working here, sire. After I left Port Arthur I got a position with the coal company whose mines are to the east of this town. On my word of honor, sire, I have had nothing to do with the war!”

“I believe you, Vanskynov. Now that the Japanese are in possession, what do you intend to do?”

“I know not. I have lost everything. My family is suffering, and dare not show themselves to the Japanese soldiers.”

“That is certainly ill luck.”

“You are, I see by your dress, a Japanese officer,” went on the clerk with a little more confidence.

"Cannot you assist me? I shall be exceedingly grateful."

"Perhaps I can—it depends upon how you've been acting. Have you taken any part in the fighting, or have you been a spy?"

"No! no! On my word of honor! I am not a fighting man!"

"Tell me, have you seen or heard anything of Ivan Snokoff since we parted at Port Arthur?"

"Have I seen him? He is here. Did you not know that?"

"Here!" cried Gilbert. "Now?"

"He was here during the fighting, and before. I have not seen him for three days."

"Show me where he was stopping."

"I will do that readily, sire. And you, you will help me," pleaded the clerk. He was lean, hungry, hollow-eyed, and his clothing was in tatters.

"Yes, I'll help you," answered the young captain.

In a minute more they were on the way to the Russian section of the town, Ben going along. They had to pass a number of burnt buildings, and then came to a side street which the fire had not touched, but which had suffered much from Japanese shells and solid shots.

"What has Ivan Snokoff been doing here?" asked Gilbert, as they walked along.

"He has been supplying the Russian soldiers with things to eat and to drink at high prices. He forced them to buy from him through his confederate, Captain Barusky."

"Where is the captain?"

"He has retreated with his command in the direction of Mukden."

"You are sure Snokoff did not go with him?"

"Yes, I am sure. But he may have followed since."

They were now coming to a well-built house at the end of the street. The front door was open, but as they approached it was suddenly slammed shut, and bolted from the inside.

"That looks suspicious!" cried Gilbert, and immediately drew his pistol, while Ben did the same.

"Hadn't we better get help?" asked Ben. "If that rascal is in there with some of his friends, he may show fight."

"Yes, get some of the guards we met at the upper corner, Ben."

Going up to the door, Gilbert knocked loudly.

"Open in the name of the Mikado!" he cried, in Russian.

There was a stir within, but no one came to the door. Then Gilbert heard hasty footsteps retreating to the rear of the building.

"Watch this door and don't let Snokoff escape," he said to the clerk.

"I will do my best, sire," was the trembling answer.

Running around the side of the building, the young captain was just in time to see the figure of a man, bundle in hand, leaping from a back window. The man was disguised as a Chinaman, and had his face stained.

"Stop!" cried the young American. "Stop, or I will fire!"

To this the man made no reply, but kept on running. Raising his pistol, Gilbert fired, and the man staggered and gave a cry of pain. The young captain had aimed for his leg and the bullet had gone true.

"Why didn't you stop when I told you?" asked Gilbert as he came up. The man had sunk to the ground at the foot of the small garden attached to the building.

"I will have the law on you for this," grumbled the man, in broken Chinese.

"You cannot deceive me, Ivan Snokoff," returned Gilbert, in Russian. And reaching forward he pulled off the false queue the Russian was wearing and cast it on the ground.

"Ha! it's Gilbert Pennington!" gasped the man.

“And in the uniform of a Japanese officer. Why do you masquerade thus?”

“It is no masquerade. I am a Japanese officer, Snokoff, and, let me add, I had a perfect right to shoot you down when I did. You can be thankful that I did not aim for your heart instead of your leg.”

“An officer of the Japanese army!” groaned Ivan Snokoff, and all his courage deserted him. “I am lost!”

“You are a fine sneak and swindler, Snokoff. You played a fine trick on me at Port Arthur.”

“It—it was all a—a mistake!” whined the other. “All a mistake, I assure you, Mr. Pennington. I mean to pay you every *ruble*, yes, every one!”

“If that’s the case, you had better pay up right now,” and Gilbert glanced at the bundle Ivan Snokoff had been carrying. “Or shall I take possession of that?”

“No! no! Do not rob me of what little I possess! This war has cost me so much! I will pay, yes, every *ruble*!”

“Very well, see that you do,” answered the young captain sternly.

By this time Ben had returned with a squad of six Japanese soldiers. The house was searched, and then put in charge of a guard.

"I'm half of a mind to have you sent to prison," said Gilbert to Snokoff, although he knew such a course would not be necessary.

"Do not, I beg of you," pleaded the rascal. "I will pay; have I not said so?"

"Very well, do so, and we can sign the papers right here."

Ben was called in, and also Nicholas Vanskynov. When Ivan Snokoff saw his former clerk he was furious.

"So it is you who have betrayed me!" he roared. He was sitting with his wounded leg bound up and resting on a bench. "Oh, that I might get at you!"

"You leave him alone," said Gilbert. "If you do not, you will only get yourself into more trouble."

The necessary papers were drawn up, and in the presence of Ben and the clerk Snokoff paid over to Gilbert all that was coming to the Richmond Importing Company—half in gold and half in Russian paper money, which the young captain knew was just as good.

"Tell me, does he owe you anything?" asked Gilbert of Nicholas Vanskynov, after this transaction was completed.

"He does, three *rubles*. And more, too, for he

once promised to pay me more salary, but he never did so."

"What would the increase of salary have amounted to?"

The clerk made a rapid calculation in his head.

"Not less than eighteen *rubles*." His eyes glistened. "But I will take fifteen, if I can get them."

"You villain! It is nothing more that I will pay!" roared Ivan Snokoff.

"Not so fast, Snokoff," said Gilbert coolly. "You had better pay up and save trouble. Remember, he can report you quite as well as I can."

At this the rascal stormed greatly. But he saw how helpless he was, and not caring to have more trouble, he finally paid his former clerk what was coming to him and ordered him to be gone. He was then left to himself, and the guard was cautioned to see to it that he did not escape.

"Well, that was certainly a piece of luck," said Gilbert, after the affair was over, and he had placed the money in a safe place. "The folks at home will be glad to hear of it."

"Snokoff will never forgive you, Gilbert," answered Ben.

"Perhaps not. But I can't help it—I only did what was right," returned the young captain.

Here let me add a few words more, and then bring to a close this story of stirring adventures while fighting "Under the Mikado's Flag."

After the evacuation of Liao-Yang by the Russians there came to Gilbert and Ben a short period of well-earned rest, during which the two young officers attended to several small wounds which they had received, and did their best to fortify themselves for the fighting still to come.

During this period of inactivity Ben received a long letter from his brother Larry, in which the sailor boy said the *Columbia* had arrived in safety at Manila, and was then taking on her cargo for Nagasaki. The letter had been delayed in various ways, and was then many weeks old.

"Larry must have left Manila long ago," said Gilbert, as he read the communication. "If the *Columbia* had a safe passage, she must have arrived at Nagasaki before this. But perhaps she fell in with some Russian warship. In that case she'd have a whole lot of trouble." The *Columbia* did fall in with one of the ships of the enemy, and what befell Larry at that time and afterward will be told in another volume, to be entitled: "At the Siege of Port Arthur; Or, A Young American in the Japanese Navy." In this tale we shall meet all our friends again, and also learn something more

about Ivan Snokoff and his confederate, Captain Barusky.

"I understand the Russians are sinking Japanese transports wherever they can find them," said Ben, after reading the letter.

"Well; it's more than likely that the Japanese are doing the same to the Russian vessels," returned Gilbert. "One thing is sure, as great as has been the fighting on land, the battles on the water are equally hot."

"And Japan is winning both on the land and on the sea. Her navy must certainly be a good one."

"Perhaps Larry will want to join the navy when he learns of all that is going on."

"If so, I can't blame him. He's a natural born sailor boy, and something of a gunner to boot," answered Ben, but without dreaming of what was in store for his brother.

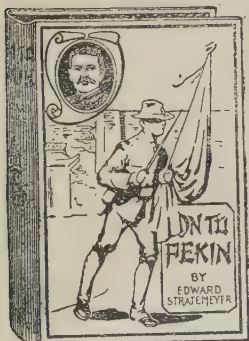
For the time being the days passed quietly enough for Gilbert and Ben. There was little for the young officers to do; so here let us leave them, knowing that, no matter what the future held in store for them, they would never forget the days spent battling "Under the Mikado's Flag."

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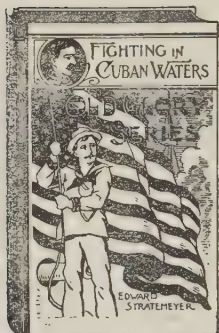
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